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Printed for the use of the Foreign Office

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(16212)

Further Correspondence

respecting

EASTERN AFFAIRS

PART XLVII

January to December 1941

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3. The Ministry of Defence, as was to be expected, again heads the list of allocations with an expenditure of I.D. 2,100,000, which is the same as the 1940-41 figure. The Ministry of the Interior comes next with an expenditure of I.D. 1,068,530, or I.D. 42,254 more than in 1940-41.

4. The vote for the Ministry of Finance is placed at I.D. 666,858, an increase of I.D. 106,538. Of this latter amount I.D. 94,063 is allotted to the Ministry itself, and I.D. 12,475 to Customs and Excise for the newly-created Tobacco Monopoly Department (see paragraph 5 to my despatch No. 489 E. under reference). A new item appears in the Ministry of Finance estimates under the heading "unforeseen expenditure," for which an appropriation of I.D. 114,000 has been made. The Ministry of Social Affairs, with an estimated expenditure of I.D. 516,660, shows an increase of I.D. 13,020 over the 1940-41 estimates.

5. In all other departments expenditure has been reduced as compared with the 1940-41 estimates. The abolition of "unnecessary posts," carried out by a Ministerial Committee, has chiefly contributed to the economies effected, resulting in a saving of approximately I.D. 120,000 to the Treasury. The largest reduction affects the Ministry of Education, the provision in this case being cut from I.D. 912,220 to I.D. 820,000. The Ministry of Communications and Works is allowed I.D. 656,880, or I.D. 45,684 less than the 1940-41 figure. The Ministry of Economics, with an estimated expenditure of I.D. 169,550, shows a reduction of I.D. 13,760. The estimates of the Ministry of Justice (I.D. 230,520) and Foreign Affairs (I.D. 85,460) are I.D. 7,965 and I.D. 9,530 lower respectively. Included in the reduction in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs estimates is the saving of I.D. 4,400 representing Iraq's annual contribution to the League of Nations, for which, the Minister of Finance declared in a memorandum attached to the 1941-42 budget estimates, no provision had been made "in view of the present international situation."

6. As regards revenue, the largest increase, amounting to I.D. 190,000, is found in the figures for Customs and Excise, which are estimated to yield I.D. 3,708,000, or 55 per cent. of the total revenue. The estimated revenue from Customs and Excise includes a sum of I.D. 100,000 from the Tobacco Monopoly Department and an increase in transit duties from I.D. 1,000 to I.D. 25,000, which is attributable, firstly, to the greater use of Iraq as a transit trade route by Turkey, Syria and Palestine, and, secondly, to the raising of the transit duty from 1 per mil to 3 per mil. It remains to be seen, however, whether receipts from Customs and Excise as a whole will be maintained in view of the recent downward trend of imports. The estimates for property, income tax and stamp duty, amounting to I.D. 846,000, show an increase of I.D. 49,000 over the 1940-41 figure, while those for Posts and Telegraphs, at I.D. 400,300, are I.D. 47,100 higher, due to the use of codes on foreign telegrams being prohibited and to higher postal and telephone rates.

7. In a memorandum attached to the budget estimates the Minister of Finance briefly reviewed the financial position at the end of the year 1940. He stated that, as a result of the surplus of I.D. 605,492 realised in the financial year 1939-40, the accumulated deficit had been reduced from I.D. 991,438 at the beginning of that year to approximately I.D. 385,000 on the 31st March, 1940. The authorised deficit in the ordinary budget estimates for 1940-41 was approximately I.D. 250,000. Economies had been achieved in expenditure which would have considerably reduced this deficit had not a variety of circumstances arisen as a result of the war which necessitated additional expenditure. The increase in the cost of provisions for the army and police, and the unexpected expenditure due to floods and locusts, had seriously added to the financial burden of the State.

8. The Minister of Finance anticipated, therefore, that the final deficit in the ordinary budget would be approximately the same as the estimated figure of I.D. 250,000. As regards the capital works accounts for the current year, these were expected to yield a surplus of between I.D. 100,000 and I.D. 150,000. On this basis he estimated that the accumulated deficit at the end of the financial year 1940-41 might rise slightly to approximately I.D. 500,000.

9. The Minister of Finance's review of the position of the State finances conflicts with the views expressed in my despatch No. 489 E. of the 19th October last, which were largely based on information obtained from senior Ministry of Finance officials. I have grounds for suspecting that the Minister did not take into account at least the following liabilities for which no provision seems to have been made:—

- (i) An expenditure of about I.D. 240,000 on the Habbaniya Escape during the current year in excess of the amount allocated for the purpose.

- (ii) At least I.D. 200,000 for the operation of the Tobacco Monopoly. The Eastern Bank have already been approached for an advance to cover this expenditure.

- (iii) The same bank have been asked to advance I.D. 80,000 to enable the Date Board to purchase surplus dates. The bank have agreed in principle to make this loan subject to its being guaranteed by the Government.

10. I am sending a copy of this despatch to the Department of Overseas Trade.

I have, &c.
BASIL NEWTON.

Enclosure in No. 2.

Summary of the Iraqi Budget Estimates for the financial year 1941-42 together with the comparative figures of the estimates for 1940-41.

EXPENDITURE.

Chapter	Budget Estimates for 1940-41.	Budget Estimates for 1941-42.
	I.D.	I.D.
I. Pensions and Gratuities ...	213,900	213,900
II. Civil List ...	56,462	55,495
III. Parliament ...	53,011	51,900
IV. Comptroller and Auditor General ...	9,590	9,060
V. Council of Ministers ...	12,122	11,897
VI. Ministry for Foreign Affairs ...	94,890	85,460
VII. Ministry of Finance ...	356,815	450,878
VIIA. Customs and Excise ...	203,505	215,980
VIII. Ministry of Interior ...	397,389	440,910
VIIIA. Iraq Police ...	628,887	627,620
VIIIB. Salaries, Ministry of Social Affairs ...	87,960	110,020
VIIIC. Health Services ...		
VIIID. Medical College and Royal Hospital, Bagdad ...	415,680	{ 297,870 108,770 }
IX. Ministry of Defence ...	2,100,000	2,100,000
X. Ministry of Justice ...	159,040	154,020
XA. Tapu Department and Land Settlement Department ...	79,435	76,490
XI. Ministry of Education ...	912,220	820,000
XII. Ministry of Economics ...	45,190	38,580
XIIA. Agriculture and Veterinary Department ...	138,120	130,970
XIII. Ministry of Communications and Works ...	74,284	69,890
XIIIA. Public Works Department ...	238,490	214,470
XIIIB. Irrigation Department ...	154,575	137,530
XIIIC. Posts and Telegraphs ...	235,215	234,990
Total Ordinary Expenditure	6,666,780	6,656,700

Chapter	RECEIPTS.
I. Taxation on Agricultural and Natural Produce, Animals and Rents of Government Properties ...	953,500 970,000
II. Property and Radio Taxes—	
Income Tax ...	796,800
Stamp Duty ...	846,000
III. Miscellaneous Revenues ...	282,250 316,200
IV. Customs and Excise ...	3,518,000 3,708,000
V. Posts and Telegraphs ...	353,200 400,300
VI. Other Government Services and Institutions ...	522,750 516,200
Total Ordinary Receipts	6,426,500 6,756,700

[E 137/1/93]

No. 3.

Sir B. Newton to Mr. Eden.—(Received January 27, 1941.)

(No. 589.)

Sir,

Bagdad, December 30, 1940.

WITH reference to my telegrams Nos. 801 and 803 of the 24th December, I have the honour to transmit to you herewith a full translation of the official text published in the press of the statement on foreign policy which the Prime Minister made to the Finance Committee of the Chamber on the 21st December.

2. As I have already reported, it contains a number of ambiguous phrases which can at will be interpreted to satisfy many different shades of opinion. For example, the first of the Prime Minister's three principles of policy is so worded that it could, at his convenience, be held to mean either that he would continue to secure the protection of Iraq through the alliance with Great Britain or that he was firmly determined not to allow the alliance to be used to embroil Iraq with Britain's enemies.

3. The second principle embraces "Iraq's national mission," but does not define it. The press, in commenting, have, however, generally assumed that this mission is to strive for the realisation of Arab national aspirations concerning Palestine and Syria.

4. The Prime Minister's third principle of foreign policy has the outward appearance of a full and frank acceptance of the letter and spirit of the Anglo-Iraqi Alliance, but it is evidently qualified by the equally emphatic statement that "as an independent State Iraq should in all her proceedings seek her national interest and the realisation of her national aspirations and avoid being carried away on a course inconsistent with these interests and aspirations." Similarly, the phrase (which is especially vague and difficult to translate in the original) "but there is no doubt that we are required to exercise much care and steadiness to bring all of these (the three principles) into harmony, and we must not be influenced by propaganda of any kind," arouses the suspicion that the third principle would in some measure be surrendered if it was found to be coming into conflict with the first or second.

5. It will be noticed that immediately after speaking of Anglo-Iraqi relations the Prime Minister referred to the strengthening of good relations with other friendly States. This is another statement that is not above suspicion, and I fear that it implies the Prime Minister's determination to seek good relations with all States prepared to be friendly with Iraq, regardless of the condition of their relations with Great Britain. My Turkish colleague expressed the personal opinion that it might be definitely intended as a kind of reassurance to Germany and Italy.

6. A Deputy who was present at the discussion relates that after the Prime Minister's statement a member asked whether there was any truth in the stories that were current to the effect that the British Government had demanded that they should be allowed to enlist Iraqis in the British army and that Iraqi troops should be sent to fight with the Allied forces. The Prime Minister replied that all such stories were quite baseless. Another member then asked why in these circumstances a crisis had developed between the Iraqi and British Governments. The Prime Minister replied that there was no crisis, but there were certain differences about which he was unable to give details, as they were still under discussion.

7. A third member asked whether the absence of the Minister for Foreign Affairs was due to the fact that he disagreed with the policy of the Cabinet. The Prime Minister said that there were no differences among the members of the Cabinet, and added that it was the custom for a minister either to accept the views of the majority of the Cabinet or to resign.

8. I have not been told what the Prime Minister hoped to achieve by his statement, but, to judge from the contents, it was just part of his general policy of trying to keep a footing in half a dozen different camps at once. Neither the Regent nor the Minister for Foreign Affairs have volunteered any allusion to it, although ten days previously General Nuri had seemed to attach importance to the publication of a declaration by the Prime Minister.

9. I am sending copies of this despatch and its enclosure to His Majesty's representatives at Cairo and Jedda.

I have, &c.
BASIL NEWTON.

Enclosure in No. 3.

Translation of Statement made by the Prime Minister on December 21 to the Finance Committee of the Chamber on the occasion of a discussion on the vote for the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

THE world is going through critical circumstances and being swept by a violent storm such as is calculated to shake and undermine the powers of even the most strongly-established nations. In the circumstances the task confronting small nations, particularly the young ones, must no doubt be most difficult. Accordingly, the management of the affairs of such nations in such troubled world conditions calls for the greatest measure of wisdom and loyalty on the part of those in places of responsibility, and for the closest co-operation and solidarity among the people, for without such co-operation the ship of State cannot reach the haven of safety.

The bases on which our foreign policy stands and by which we are guided in seeking to steer a sound course in the present terrible world conditions are three in number:—

Firstly.—To ensure the safety of the country and not to involve the country in any action calculated to drag it into the war; to exert the utmost efforts to ensure the continuance of the tranquillity which the country has been enjoying notwithstanding the frightful world struggle, in order that the members of the nation should be able to continue their normal activities to their own interest and the interest of the whole nation and to conserve all their energies for the service of their country and for the defence of their national existence should compelling need arise.

Secondly.—To continue the discharge of the national mission which Iraq has taken upon herself to carry out, especially as Iraq is one of the Arab States enjoying the boon of independence and is in a position to voice the national aspirations and seek their realisation.

Thirdly.—To discharge our international undertakings, such as the Arab Alliance and Pact of Non-Aggression, which unites us to our neighbours. As regards our relations with our Ally, Great Britain, these are, as you know, based on the Treaty of Alliance concluded between us. We have adhered, and shall continue to adhere, to the fulfilment of this treaty, both in the letter and the spirit, striving continuously for the strengthening of the links of friendship between us on a reciprocal basis. Similarly, our friendly relations are being strengthened with States in amity with us.

I and my colleagues have undertaken upon ourselves, in truth and sincerity, to proceed in the light of these three principles, but there is no doubt that we are required to exercise much care and steadiness to bring them all into harmony and we must not be influenced by propaganda of any kind, especially as in their present struggle the various nations are each attempting to enlist in its own service all the forces of the world. Having regard to the important position it occupies, Iraq is the first country to which attention will be turned in this connexion. So our principal duty is to find the correct course for us to follow in this troubled sea in order to lead the nation to safety while realising its high aims.

I must, however, make it plain that, as an independent State, Iraq should, in all her proceedings, seek her national interest and the realisation of her national aspirations and avoid being carried away towards a course inconsistent with these interests and aspirations.

I wish to seize the occasion to thank the various leaders and members of the nation who have supported the Government and acted loyally to their country.

In conclusion, I pray God to help us and guide our steps in the present historic stage in our national life in order that we should continue our progress towards our high goal under the ægis of our beloved King and the noble Regent.

[E 337/1/93]

No. 4.

Mr. Eden to Sir B. Newton (Bagdad).

(No. 7.)

Sir,

Foreign Office, January 31, 1941.

THE Iraqi Chargé d'Affaires called to-day to inform me that he had been instructed to communicate to me a message from the new Iraqi Minister for Foreign Affairs. This message was to the effect that the Iraqi Government fully intended to adhere to the Treaty of Alliance, both in the letter and in the spirit,

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and that the maintenance of cordial relations with their Ally was their fixed policy.

2. I enquired whether it was correct, as stated in the press this morning, that Naji-al-Asil had succeeded General Nuri as Minister for Foreign Affairs. M. Ata Amin replied that this was a mistaken report and that the new Minister was Moussa Shabandar, who had formerly been, he said, a rather junior counsellor at Berlin, from which capital he had been withdrawn when relations with Germany were broken off. M. Ata Amin added, in reply to a further question, that he understood that there had been four resignations from the Cabinet, namely, General Nuri, Naji Shawkat, Naji Suwwaidi and Amin Zahi. These Ministers had been replaced by rather unimportant figures drawn from the official classes, of whom Moussa Shabandar was one. He appeared to think that a Government constituted on these lines could hardly last.

3. Having received your telegram No. 87 of the 30th January shortly before the interview, I asked M. Ata Amin whether he knew where the Prince Regent was. He appeared much surprised and said he was presumably in Bagdad. I said that our information was different, and that we understood that the Prime Minister had asked His Royal Highness for a dissolution of Parliament and that the Prince Regent had subsequently left Bagdad. M. Ata Amin was evidently quite ignorant of these developments and could only say that he thought that there must have been a Royal iradah for the appointment of the new Ministers.

4. I observed that the situation seemed so confused that M. Ata Amin would realise I could not say very much by way of comment on the communication he had made to me. I suggested that he should inform his Government that he had made the communication as directed, and that I had taken note of it.

I am, &c.

ANTHONY EDEN.

[E 653/653/93]

No. 5.

Sir B. Newton to Mr. Eden.—(Received February 25.)

(No. 23.)

Sir,

Bagdad, January 17, 1941.

IN accordance with the instructions contained in Viscount Halifax's circular despatch of the 4th November, 1939, I have the honour to submit the following review of the situation in Iraq during 1940:—

2. The cloud of war, which a year ago loomed no larger than a man's hand on the horizon of Mesopotamia, grew with biblical rapidity until by the end of September it had darkened the greater part of the sky. Since then it has receded appreciably, but its presence in larger or smaller shape throughout the year must be accounted the major determinant of the course of local events. Above all it provided a test of Iraq's loyalty to her alliance with Great Britain, a test in which she notably failed.

3. At the beginning of the year the Government formed by Nuri Said on Christmas Day 1938 was still in office and, despite growing opposition, showed no signs of disintegration until on the 18th January Rustam Haidar, Minister of Finance and one of the ablest members of the Cabinet, was shot in his office by an ex-inspector of police and received wounds of which he subsequently died. Two ex-Cabinet Ministers and opponents of Nuri were, among others, arrested on the strength of the murderer's statements. The Prime Minister was thus exposed to two fires: acquittal of these men would infuriate the Shias (of which sect Rustam Haidar had been), while their conviction would lay him open to a charge of political persecution. On the 18th February he therefore tendered his resignation to the Regent, it being understood that a new Government would be formed by Rashid Ali-al-Gailani, who was then chief private secretary at the Palace and had been Prime Minister from March to October 1933, with Nuri as Minister for Foreign Affairs. These arrangements fell through owing to the opposition of the Chief of the General Staff (General Husain Fauzi) and General Amin-al-Umari, the Officer Commanding the First Division, but when these officers sought to impose their views on the Regent they were relieved of their appointments and placed on pension. The search for alternative combinations having failed, Nuri returned to office on the 21st February. This stop-gap Government, in which the only change of note was the omission of Ali Jaudat, previously Minister for Foreign Affairs, lasted a bare five weeks, during which time the Prime Minister's position became less and less tenable.

The Rustam Haidar murder trial, indeed, passed off without overt trouble; the murderer was sentenced to death and the other accused were acquitted of complicity, although one of them, Sabih Najib, was given a year's imprisonment for "exciting hatred against the Government." But the time was ripe for a change, as Nuri had lost most of his popularity and following, and at the second attempt the formation of a new Cabinet under Rashid Ali was successfully accomplished.

4. Nuri Said resigned on the 28th March, and three days later a new Administration had been formed by the first Prime Minister to enter upon office in a constitutional manner since the death of King Faisal I. All members of the outgoing Cabinet, with the exception of Dr. Sami Shaukat, found places in the new—Nuri taking the portfolio of Foreign Affairs—and an important section of the potential Opposition was neutralised by the inclusion of Naji Shaukat and Naji Suwwaidi. Rashid Ali, who doubtless realised that his previous record might make him suspect, was profuse with the most emphatic assurances of his intention to collaborate wholeheartedly with His Majesty's Government. His subsequent story has been a sorry one of attempted blackmail over Palestine and Syria, disregard of treaty obligations, encouragement of anti-British sentiment and intrigue with our enemies.

5. During 1939 the presence of the cloud of war at so safe a distance exerted but little influence on developments in Iraq. After the initial cloudburst in Poland the gentle drizzle which issued from it over Western Europe merely had occasional value as news and gave rise to hopes that it might hasten the emancipation of Palestine and Syria. With the rapid gathering of the storm in the spring and summer of 1940 the Iraqi had as rapidly to readjust his ideas. The Allied defeat in Norway, the enslavement of the Low Countries, the significant entry of Italy into the war, the capitulation of France, with its consequences for Britain both at home and in the Mediterranean, brought him face to face with the possibility that the deluge might spread even to this distant desert. Naturally he found the prospect alarming, and the attitude of the average Iraqi was well expressed by one of the chief and most anti-British newspapers, the *Istiqlal*, when it said: "The policy of the Arab nation is dictated by the desire on the one hand to avoid the dangers of war, and on the other to exploit any opportunities presenting themselves."

6. Since Iraq could not hope to stand alone, Rashid Ali had some excuse in feeling that a policy of reinsurance with the Axis would be prudent in itself and useful as a means of extorting concessions from Great Britain. German successes and Allied reverses, grave enough and vastly magnified by unceasing propaganda, at one time induced a wide-spread belief in Iraq that Great Britain might well be defeated; it was an easy course for the Prime Minister to maintain his position at home by beating the pan-Arab drum, which, with the ex-Mufti of Jerusalem and his henchmen active in Bagdad, inevitably sounded an anti-British note; enemy agents were also busy and spent freely. Whether any Iraqi politician honestly believed that the country could stand to gain from a victory of the Axis—or even retain a shadow of independence—may be doubted; many, however, despite their rhetorical expressions of love for independence, might be content with the post of a Gauleiter or something similar. At all events Rashid Ali, while continuing to pay occasional lip-service to the British connexion, embarked on a policy fundamentally opposed to British interests.

7. Up to the time of Italy's entry into the war the Government conducted itself fairly well and, while refusing to give any positive lead to public opinion, Rashid Ali, in response to my urgent representations, did take steps to check the dissemination of German propaganda and paid some heed to the lessons about internal treachery taught by Norway and the Netherlands. The testing time came on the 11th June, when—probably at the instance of Naji Shaukat—the Cabinet decided to disregard the precedent set by their predecessors in regard to Germany and to postpone the rupture of diplomatic relations with Italy, who had declared war on the Allies the previous day. Despite my strong and repeated representations and the example given by Egypt this decision was maintained and seemed, unhappily, to many Iraqis to have been a wise one, when France collapsed a week after the Italian declaration of war. At the end of the year the Italian Minister, with a considerably reinforced staff, was still in Bagdad. "Absolute neutrality" became the slogan of Rashid Ali's foreign policy and was assiduously advertised throughout the Government-controlled press, while the good advice regarding the wisdom of firmly supporting Great Britain which Nuri Said received when he visited Angora at the end of June was disregarded. British prestige had reached its lowest ebb, and even Nuri seems to have concluded

that Iraq and the Arab nations should consider what steps they could take to safeguard their future irrespective of Great Britain. The position in Syria (where Nuri stopped on his return from Turkey) resulting from the collapse of France now became a major issue, and here, too, Iraqi policy, aiming at "liberation," came into conflict with that of His Majesty's Government, who for the time being wished to see the authority of the mandatory Power upheld. This divergence vied with, and almost superseded, the Palestine problem as the alleged obstacle to true Anglo-Iraqi co-operation. It was another opening for the second end of policy, namely, "to exploit any opportunities presenting themselves." With France defeated and Great Britain struggling for her existence, there appeared to have come a golden opportunity for Iraq to intervene as the saviour of downtrodden Palestine and Syria and the champion of the pan-Arab cause. The mission of Colonel Newcombe to establish contact with the Palestinian nationalists encouraged hopes that Great Britain was yielding, but, of course, in doing so was thought to show a readiness to consider their ambitions in an unofficial way. It may, therefore, have helped to tide over a critical period for us of particular difficulty and weakness. Many schemes were propounded for Syria, ranging from occupation by the Iraqi army to a polite *démarche* at Vichy by the Arab Powers calling for the Constitution to be restored. Many suggestions were brought up for Palestine in discussions with Colonel Newcombe, but none acceptable to His Majesty's Government. The return of Colonel Newcombe to England, followed by the intimation on the 29th August that His Majesty's Government could not depart from their declared policy in regard to Palestine, and the failure of Nuri Said during an impetuous visit to Transjordan and Egypt in mid-August to obtain any support for joint action in the matter of Syria, dashed these hopes, engendered bitterness, and drove the pan-Arab and anti-British elements to seek their aims by reckless and subterranean methods. Blackmail having failed, the stage was set for more sinister activities.

8. How long reinsurance had been under surreptitious negotiation is not clear, though an approach to the Axis Powers was being advised already in July by the Iraqi representative at Vichy. Early in September Naji Shaukat left for Istanbul, ostensibly for reasons of health, but, in fact, to establish contact with Herr von Papen, the German Ambassador to Turkey. Meanwhile, the attitude of the press, censorship of which was in fact, though not in theory, largely controlled by the Ministry of Defence, continued to deteriorate; anti-British and pro-Axis propaganda increased rapidly throughout the country. An official declaration of the sympathy of the Axis with Arab aspirations, broadcast from Berlin on the 21st October and subsequently repeated from Bari, received wide publicity, and no criticism of it was permitted for some time to appear in the press. On the 28th October Naji Shaukat returned from Turkey, the bearer, it was believed, of German proposals. Three days later the resumption of direct telegraphic communication between Iraq and Germany and Italy was announced in the press. Whether or not there was any connexion between the two events, the latter could only be regarded as a direct provocation to ourselves. At the same time irrefutable evidence was reaching London that Rashid Ali himself was intriguing with the Axis, and stories derived from a variety of sources were circulating that Iraq was about to resume diplomatic relations with Germany. The Regent's Speech from the Throne at the opening of Parliament on the 5th November contained only the most perfunctory reference to the Alliance with Great Britain.

9. By the end of November the patience of His Majesty's Government was exhausted, and it was made plain that unless a new Government could be formed without Rashid Ali, British relations with Iraq must continue to deteriorate until they reached a crisis. The Regent and Nuri Said had for some time been anxious to bring about the elimination of the Prime Minister; important political personalities out of office professed the same view; and there was no evidence of any popular support in the country for the Cabinet's policy—rather the contrary. The army political clique, led by Colonel Salah-ud-Din Sabbagh and in which pro-Nazi influence was strong, were, however, opposed to a change as a result of which their own wings might be clipped, and in the background the ex-Mufti was exercising, both directly and indirectly, the strongest and most undesirable influence. Rashid Ali himself offered, indeed, every assurance of his intention of continuing to fulfil the Treaty of Alliance (from which he blandly claimed never to have departed), but it was too late for any such assurance to be acceptable. The fertile brain of Nuri Pasha evolved scheme upon scheme for his elimination, but none progressed beyond its initial stages. An intimation to

Rashid Ali by the Regent that he would be well advised to resign was rejected with a hint from the Minister of Defence, General Taha, that such advice was unconstitutional; there were periodical rumours, not wholly unfounded, that the army were preparing to resist any change of Government; and enquiry was made in London whether the representations which I had made were upheld by the Secretary of State. The attitude of His Majesty's Government was unequivocal; they were not to be appeased with fair promises, and the opportune success of British arms in the Western Desert lent force to their words. They were seconded by the United States and Turkish Governments, who both indicated the importance which they attached to the maintenance of good relations by Iraq with Great Britain. Economic pressure was initiated. None the less, characteristic delays, hesitations and personal jealousies impeded the fall of Rashid Ali. Although there seemed to be an increasing realisation in political circles that he must go, the end of the year saw him still obstinately, if desperately, clinging to office.

10. Owing to the delays which must inevitably occur in the distribution of this review through your department, under war-time conditions, I am sending copies direct to his Excellency the Governor-General of India, His Majesty's representatives at Cairo, Angora and Jedda, his Excellency the High Commissioner for Palestine and Transjordan and the Political Resident in the Persian Gulf.

I have, &c.

BASIL NEWTON.

[E 795/40/93]

No. 6.

Mr. Winston Churchill to Sir K. Cornwallis (Bagdad).

(No. 22.)

Sir,

Foreign Office, March 11, 1941.

IN his telegram No. 660 of the 7th November last Sir Basil Newton referred to the possibility of financial and economic assistance for Iraq and enumerated the points on which it seemed to him most important that the Iraqi Government should in return take action to meet the wishes of His Majesty's Government.

2. The position as regards financial assistance is that His Majesty's Government would in principle be prepared to agree to a direct subsidy to the Iraqi Government. The most convenient basis for such a subsidy seems to be the payment of a sum sufficient to make up the decrease in the oil royalties due in present circumstances from the Iraq Petroleum Company. I understand that, although the figure involved cannot yet be accurately forecast, it would amount to between £500,000 and £800,000 per annum. Payment would be made in monthly instalments, so that the subsidy could at once be stopped if the Iraqi Government failed to fulfil their undertakings. The subsidy would be in sterling and would only be available for expenditure in the sterling area.

3. Out of this sum the Iraqi Government would be required to repay to His Majesty's Government, in monthly instalments of £15,000 free of interest, their outstanding debt of some £300,000 for the Hinaidi buildings.

4. If such a subsidy is paid, His Majesty's Government would expect the Iraqi Government to reappoint a British financial adviser. The deterioration of their finances since the termination of the former adviser's contract should convince them that such an appointment would be in their own interest. It is, of course, in the interest of His Majesty's Government, in order to prevent misuse of the subsidy, *e.g.*, by maintaining agitators from Palestine.

5. As soon as the Iraqi Government's attitude again becomes satisfactory His Majesty's Government will be prepared, if necessary, to provide dollars for the commercial needs of Iraq to an annual amount of £150,000. It is, however, at present impossible for His Majesty's Government to provide dollars for military expenditure in the United States of America, since they have informed the United States Government that they no longer have any dollars to meet their own military expenditure in the United States of America and are on this ground obtaining assistance from the United States Government. The question whether some arrangement could be made with the United States Government by which war material could be supplied to Iraq could be considered when circumstances appear to warrant it, but in any case it is not certain that it is in the interests of His Majesty's Government to provide assistance in this matter, especially

in view of the doubts they feel as to the use to which such material might be put on its arrival in Iraq.

6. As a condition of providing the Iraqi Government with foreign exchange, His Majesty's Government would also require them to establish a satisfactory system of exchange control on the lines already suggested to them. This is important from the point of view of His Majesty's Government, since money can be transferred to Iraq freely from the rest of the sterling area, including this country, and there is therefore a grave risk that leakage might take place on a very large scale. It is also in the interest of Iraqi Government, since dollars can only be supplied to them in strictly limited quantities, and it is only by establishing effective exchange control that they can ensure that the best possible use is made of the dollars they earn themselves.

7. If His Majesty's Government are to pay a direct subsidy to the Iraqi Government, other types of economic assistance may be unnecessary. They would in any case be more difficult to arrange in practice. As regards barley, for instance, the Iraqi Government cannot really need any assistance to dispose of their surplus crops since the demand for barley in the Middle East, and particularly the requirements of Greece, make it likely that the Iraqi crop will be disposed of at a very favourable price. The Greek Government have, however, been requested to authorise His Majesty's Government to negotiate on their behalf, and I hope that it may be possible to make some political capital out of the matter.

8. The Iraqi Government have, indeed, asked for the help of His Majesty's Government over Zahdi dates, but these are of such poor quality as not to be worth shipping space. Any purchase of them would merely be for destruction and, I think, that if payment has to be made to relieve distress among Iraqi producers, it had better be made by the Iraqi Government.

9. I shall, of course, be grateful to receive any suggestions that your Excellency may wish to make for using to better political advantage the money which His Majesty's Government are prepared to spend. I should mention in this connexion the possibility that His Majesty's Government may, for strategic reasons, wish improvements of various kinds to be effected in the Iraqi railway system. In present circumstances such improvements could hardly be made except at the expense of His Majesty's Government.

10. Of the requirements of His Majesty's Government in Iraq by far the most urgent is to secure the formation of a new Government prepared to co-operate with them in the spirit of the alliance. I attach importance also to rupture of relations with Italy, if only because this step would make it clear in Iraq and elsewhere that the Iraqi Government have at last decided, despite the intrigues of the Axis and the German declaration to the Arabs, to stand by their obligations towards His Majesty's Government. I also attach great importance to action being taken to stop the Mufti's intrigues. It may be difficult even for a well-disposed Government to take really effective action against him, but even so it should be possible to exercise some measure of control over him, and to put an end to the present system, under which he abuses Iraqi hospitality in acting practically openly as an enemy agent.

11. Three additional points were mentioned in Sir Basil Newton's telegram under reference.

12. *Point 2: Propaganda.*—An improvement in the tone of press and wireless broadcasts would no doubt follow the entry into power of a more friendly Government, but I agree that His Majesty's Government would certainly have to see that very definite improvements did in fact take place and were maintained.

13. *Point 4: Education.*—I agree that the appointment of a British adviser in the Ministry of Education would be useful, and you may well wish to pursue this suggestion if a favourable opportunity occurs. Presumably the post would carry no executive powers, but even so the right man might be able to influence the Ministry's policy in many directions, and could also co-operate effectively with the British Council.

14. *Point 5: Economic Warfare.*—As regards economic warfare, importance is attached to closer Iraqi collaboration in checking re-exports to doubtful destinations, and the smuggling of goods to Syria so long as the policy of economic pressure on Syria is maintained; also in controlling goods in transit, whether destined for, or originating in, countries to which their equivalent to Trading with the Enemy Act has been made to apply. In this connexion I would invite your attention to my telegram No. 96, Arfar, of the 22nd December last regarding German exports to Iran. I realise that the prohibition of this trade

may cause difficulties between the Governments of Iraq and Iran, but it is a step which His Majesty's Government are clearly entitled under article 4 of the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of Alliance to require that the Iraqi Government shall take, and is one to which they attach importance.

I am, &c.

WINSTON S. CHURCHILL.

[E 694/1/93]

No. 7.

Mr. Winston Churchill to Sir K. Cornwallis (Bagdad).

(No. 23.)
Sir,

Foreign Office, March 11, 1941.

ONE of the main difficulties which your Excellency will have to face in the execution of your mission in Iraq consists in the intense interest taken by the more politically-minded section of Iraqis in Arab affairs outside their own country, particularly in His Majesty's Government's Palestine policy, and in such questions as the future of Syria and the possibility of Arab Federation.

2. This interest has been exploited by German propaganda. On the 1st October last an official declaration was issued by the German Government to the effect that Germany has always sympathised with the Arab question and hoped that the Arabs will one day regain their position in the world, which will honour their race and their great history. It was added that the German Government have followed with interest the struggle for independence in the Arab countries, and that in that struggle the Arabs can rely unhesitatingly on entire German sympathy. The declaration concluded by stating that in this matter Germany was in full accord with her ally Italy.

3. It should have been obvious, and Sir Basil Newton has on several occasions drawn the attention of leading Iraqis to this point, that the German Government carefully confined themselves in this declaration to the most general terms, and avoided undertaking obligations of any kind. Doubtless, however, in their oral propaganda they have gone much further than vague expressions of sympathy, and the enthusiasm, which they have certainly succeeded in arousing in some influential Iraqi circles, is by no means solely due to the bribes which they have lavishly distributed, but is also inspired by the genuine belief that pan-Arab hopes and ambitions may be realised in due course with German assistance.

4. In the making of promises to the Arabs, it is not possible for His Majesty's Government, in view of their international obligations and strategic requirements, to compete with the German Government. I am, however, most anxious that you should be in a position to combat enemy influence so far as possible, and that you should make every effort to build up in Iraq an effective body of opinion which will look to His Majesty's Government, not Germany, as the natural friend of the Arabs and the champion of their legitimate aspirations. The British record in Iraq should provide you with the best arguments to use in this connexion, but you will no doubt wish to know what line you may take on the three questions referred to in paragraph 1 above, namely, Palestine, Syria and Arab Federation, both when speaking officially and in private conversation.

5. *Palestine.*—On the question of Palestine you may say that His Majesty's Government do not see any reason to make any change in their policy as laid down in the white paper of 1939, and that it remains unchanged.

6. You should not volunteer any further information, but, if questioned regarding the implementation of that policy, you should point out that important steps have already been taken to put it into effect. Immigration and land sales are, in fact, already being regulated in accordance with the provisions of the white paper. His Majesty's Government are making strenuous efforts to reduce illegal immigration in every possible way. As your Excellency will be aware, it has often in practice proved impossible to deport illegal immigrants to their country of origin, since they have taken care to destroy all documents regarding their identity. However, the number of these illegal immigrants whom it has been found necessary to retain in Palestine has been deducted from the total permitted under the white paper. Moreover, some 1,600 illegal immigrants were recently sent to Mauritius for detention during the period of hostilities, and it has been announced that it is not proposed that they should, at the end of the war, remain in that colony or go to Palestine. The total figure for immigrants of all categories (including illegal immigrants) since April 1939 is approximately 30,000. The white paper provided for a total immigration of 75,000 spread over

five years, and there seems therefore no particular ground for alarm among the Arabs on this score.

7. As regards constitutional development, the white paper states explicitly that the first step, viz., the appointment of a few Palestinian heads of departments, will only take place "when peace and order have been sufficiently restored in Palestine." It is recognised that conditions in Palestine have greatly improved from the security point of view, but you should explain that, even so, it will probably be found impracticable to embark on constitutional and administrative changes of this nature under war conditions, particularly since, in spite of the recent British successes against Italy, Palestine must be regarded as closely involved in the military operations in the Middle East. While His Majesty's Government hope and expect that, when the war is ended, conditions in Palestine will permit the various steps of constitutional development to follow upon one another in orderly succession on the lines already laid down, they feel that these conditions afford adequate justification for delay at present.

8. I have no doubt that you will frequently be asked in private conversation for an expression of your own personal views regarding the likelihood of a change in His Majesty's Government's policy, either to the advantage of the Arabs or to that of the Jews. In reply to such enquiries, you should say that you see no reason to suppose that His Majesty's Government will decide to change the policy announced in 1939. It is true that the policy laid down by His Majesty's Government in the white paper of 1939 was in form merely a statement of intention on their part. If the Arab representatives who were present in London in the spring of 1939 had been willing to accept the basis of His Majesty's Government's proposals, a formal agreement, binding upon both parties, could have been concluded. That would have left no room for doubt or misgiving in any quarter. As it was, matters had necessarily to be left in a less determinate shape. If the result has been to create feelings of uncertainty, it is much to be regretted; but His Majesty's Government cannot admit that the blame rests with themselves, or indeed that doubts regarding future British policy have any justification.

9. *Syria*.—On the 1st July last, immediately after the collapse of French resistance, His Majesty's Government issued a declaration to the effect that they could not allow Syria or the Lebanon to be occupied by any hostile Power, or to be used as a base for attacks upon those countries in the Middle East which they are obliged to defend, or to become the scene of such disorder as to constitute a danger to those countries. His Majesty's Government therefore held themselves free to take whatever measures they might in such circumstances consider necessary in their own interests. It was added that any action which they might thereafter be obliged to take in fulfilment of this declaration would be entirely without prejudice to the future status of the territories then under French mandate.

10. This declaration was deliberately framed to cover only the strategic requirements of His Majesty's Government, and, as your Excellency will see, it contained no reference to the interests of the population of Syria or the Lebanon, still less to Syrian aspirations for independence. It cannot therefore be expected to provide you with any great assistance in dealing with Arab politicians.

11. The Syrian policy of His Majesty's Government is at present under review, and all that you can say at present is that His Majesty's Government have much sympathy with the Syrian desire for independence, though they doubt whether in the present state of world affairs Syria would be able, any more than Iraq, to stand entirely on its own feet. You should lose no opportunity of making it clear that the degree of our support for Syrian aspirations, now and at the end of the war, will naturally depend on the attitude which the Syrians are themselves prepared to adopt during the present struggle.

12. *Arab Federation*.—There remains the question of the line you should take if questioned with regard to the attitude of His Majesty's Government towards some form of closer union among the Arab States. The problem of Arab Federation was fully discussed in a Foreign Office memorandum dated the 28th September, 1939, and, so far as I am aware, little progress has been made since that date in Arab countries to overcome the difficulties involved, or to draw up any practical scheme for realising Arab aspirations. You may, however, certainly make it clear that His Majesty's Government are inclined to view these aspirations with sympathy, for it is evident that, if the Arab countries could co-operate closely with each other, they would greatly benefit from such collaboration. His Majesty's Government therefore would not wish to oppose the principle of "Arab Federation" if the matter were ever to be raised in a practical form. His Majesty's Government would, however, be unwilling to take the initiative in

drawing up any scheme for promoting Arab union, and they think that this initiative must come from the Arabs themselves. It has always been the aim of His Majesty's Government, as far as lies in their power, to promote friendly relations between the Arab States, and you may certainly say that His Majesty's Government will view with sympathy practical proposals to increase co-operation, provided that such proposals have the support of all leading Arab groups, and that the international obligations and strategic requirements of His Majesty's Government are adequately safeguarded.

13. *Summary*.—I fear that the foregoing statement of what your Excellency is authorised to say on the problems of Palestine, Syria and the Arab Federation shows clearly that it will not be feasible for you to endeavour to win over Arab opinion by holding out attractive promises on these three matters. You will, however, be able to cast doubt upon the value of any promises made by the Axis Powers. What guarantee, for example, except the armed forces of the British Empire, is there, or can there be, against the incorporation of Palestine, Syria and Iraq, with her valuable oil, in an Italian colonial empire, where the Arab inhabitants would doubtless receive the same treatment as the Arabs in Libya? No declaration, no assurance by the German or Italian Governments can give Iraq security from such a fate. You can point out that the only country which has shown itself willing to maintain Iraqi independence is the United Kingdom, and that the true interests of Iraq obviously require a British victory.

I am, &c.

WINSTON S. CHURCHILL.

[E 1009/1/93]

No. 8.

Sir B. Newton to Mr. Eden.—(Received March 18.)

(No. 74.)

Sir,

Bagdad, February 17, 1941.

WITH reference to my telegram No. 660 of the 11th November, 1940, I have the honour to submit as an enclosure to this despatch a list of requirements on the satisfaction of which His Majesty's Government should, I suggest, insist as steps on the way to better relations.

2. There are signs that my constant repetition of warnings about the consequences of leaving public opinion without proper guidance on the subject of Anglo-Iraqi relations (item 3 on the list) may at last be having some effect, although I realise that in a country like Iraq such effects may only be of a temporary nature, and be due to the general political situation at the moment. In his address on the 6th February (see my telegram No. 119 of the 2nd February) the Prime Minister did not give a very strong positive lead to the press, but his admonitions may for the time being assist in preventing hostile and tendentious comment in such papers as the *Istiqlal*.

3. As regards items 5 and 7 you will have seen from my telegram No. 132 of the 14th February, 1941, that the encouragement of Palestinian political refugees to return from Iraq to their own country is again under active discussion and that there appears to be a realisation of the need for the appointment of a new Director-General of Railways (see my telegram No. 141 of the 15th February).

4. As regards the first two items on the list the Minister for Foreign Affairs told me a few days ago that he had enquired into the recent increases in the staff of the Italian Legation and by his blunt manner of doing so had conveyed to the Minister and his staff that they must be careful, and that the attitude of the new Government would be different from their predecessors'. This may portend a movement in the right direction, but in itself is, of course, quite inadequate.

5. The new Minister for Foreign Affairs, Taufiq Suwaidi, shows some disposition to co-operate in this and other matters, but I cannot say the same of the Prime Minister. The service which General Taha is best placed for rendering to his country and to Anglo-Iraqi relations is to discipline and sterilise political elements in the army which are subversive of the stability of Iraq and hostile to Great Britain. Present indications are that he is unlikely to take effective action. If they are confirmed one of the chief reasons for treating General Taha with consideration in the hope that he would render such a service will have disappeared.

I have, &c.

BASIL NEWTON.

Enclosure in No. 8.

*Our Main Requirements from the Iraqi Government.**Major Category.*

1. THE breaking off of diplomatic relations with Italy.
2. The cessation of all intrigues with the Axis Powers and Japan.
3. The proper guidance by the Government of public opinion on the subject of Anglo-Iraqi relations.
4. Elimination from politics of hostile military elements.
5. The encouragement of Palestine political refugees to return to their homes and the removal from official posts, especially in education, of men who are well known for their openly expressed hostility towards Great Britain.
6. The effective control of the Mufti's activities. When he came to Iraq the Iraqi Government gave an undertaking that the Mufti would not be permitted to indulge in any form of political activity. In spite of this, he now directs a large political organisation and plays a prominent part in public life in this country.

Minor Category.

7. The proper observance of the Railway Agreement, in particular the appointment of a British Director-General.
8. Closer collaboration in contraband control matters and in particular the prevention of the *transit* through Iraq of contraband and of goods of enemy origin.
9. The establishment of collaboration between the Iraqi press department and the embassy, with a view to the co-ordination of propaganda as between the two Allied Governments.

[E 1317/1/93]

No. 9.

Sir B. Newton to Mr. Eden.—(Received April 7.)

(No. 87. Very Confidential.)

Sir,

Bagdad, February 27, 1941.

I HAVE the honour to transmit to you herewith a copy of a letter from Mr. Edmonds, the adviser to the Ministry of the Interior, in which he gives an interesting and informative account of the political events which led up to the resignation of Rashid Ali-al-Gailani on the 31st January.

2. I am sending a copy of this despatch to His Majesty's Ambassador in Cairo.

I have, &c.

BASIL NEWTON.

Enclosure in No. 9.

Mr. Edmonds to Sir B. Newton.

(Secret.)

My dear Ambassador,

Bagdad, February 15, 1941.

IN December I began to write you a letter carrying down to the end of the year, from the point where I left it in my letter dated the 10th October, my appreciation of the effects of the progress of the war on the political situation in Iraq, but the accelerating *tempo* of the ministerial crisis left me no leisure to complete it. This crisis came to an end on the 1st February, 1941, and it might seem a waste of time to go over again, at this late date, the familiar events of the last four months. But it may nevertheless be useful, for purposes of future reference if nothing better, to put down some of my ideas about them and about the factors that were at work.

2. In my letter of the 10th October I expressed the opinions:—

- (a) That, starting from the last days of August, the policy of the Cabinet in so far as it was influenced by the Palestine grievance, would be found to have taken on a more reckless and vindictive form than heretofore;

- (b) That Ministers had not yet recovered from the state of trepidation into which they had been thrown by the events of June, and that eccentric behaviour was still to be expected for some time, unless spectacular victories in Europe or Africa were to come to restore their balance;
- (c) That the Cabinet, though disunited and doomed by all the rules to early demise, was nevertheless likely to be kept alive for some time by the difficulty of finding a practicable alternative; and
- (d) That nothing much more than a lukewarm implementation of the alliance was to be expected from any Iraqi Cabinet, at any rate until we were on the crest of an unmistakable wave of success.

The developments of the last four months can conveniently be considered under these four heads:—

(A)

3. The events of October revolve round the person of Naji Shawkat, the Minister of Justice. He had left for Istanbul early in September "for reasons of health," though even before his departure was announced it was rumoured that he would be going there in order to get in touch with the Axis Powers. On the 24th October the Arabic press reproduced a declaration of sympathy with Arab aspirations broadcast on the German wireless. On the 28th October Naji Shawkat returned to Bagdad. It was widely believed that it was he who had secured this declaration and that he had undertaken in exchange to recommend to his own Government a number of German desiderata, the first then being:—

- (a) The opening of direct telegraphic communication with Italy and Germany;
- (b) The subsequent resumption of diplomatic relations with Germany; and
- (c) The introduction of anti-Jewish legislation "as already agreed to by Bulgaria."

4. The German declaration was welcomed in the press, though less for the value of the promises it contained than as an admission by important European Powers of the importance of the Arabs as a factor in world politics and of the necessity of conciliating them. The Director-General of Press and Propaganda made frantic and undignified efforts to suppress criticism of the declaration or any exposure of its hollow and worthless character, as if it were, in fact, the Cabinet's child. The Iraqi Chargé d'Affaires in Rome asked for (apparently on his own initiative, and not on instructions), and received, the authentic text of the corresponding declaration made on the Italian wireless; it was passed on to one or two departments for information.

5. Telegraphic communication with Germany and Italy had never been stopped by specific order. It had ceased automatically soon after the outbreak of hostilities with each by reason of the refusal of the normal agencies, Marconi in Cairo, Radio-Orient in Beirut, and the Persian Gulf cable, to accept telegrams addressed to those countries. Suddenly on the 21st October (on the file shown to me by the then Minister of Communications and Works there is no sign of any preliminaries) the Director-General of Posts and Telegraphs telegraphed to Persia asking at what rates telegrams should be accepted in Iraq for transmission to Germany and Italy via Tehran; a reply having been received, a circular instruction was sent to all offices intimating the rates. This operation cannot be described as a routine resumption of telegraphic communications never officially interrupted; it involved the opening of a new circuit not shown in the Berne list.

6. There is no doubt that, as early as the end of June or the beginning of July (see my note on pan-Arab activity in Iraq of the 31st July, 1940, paragraphs 17 and 18), a resumption of relations with Germany had begun to be regarded by some people as a wise measure of reinsurance. It is interesting to note that already at that time the names of Musa Shahbandar and Ali Haidar (both of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs) were mentioned as possible emissaries, for, six months later, the former was appointed Minister for Foreign Affairs in Rashid Ali's short-lived Blackleg Cabinet and the latter, junior official though he is, was being freely tipped for the Ministry of Economics. In the only conversation I had with him Musa made no secret of his views on the original rupture with Germany (see my letter of the 3rd February, 1941, last paragraph).

7. As regards anti-Jewish legislation, it is only fair to record that even the rumours had it that Rashid Ali and Naji Suwaidi had set their faces firmly against any such suggestion, though, it was alleged, primarily for reasons connected with their own financial affairs.

8. Another example of growing recklessness was the preparation early in November, and submission to the Regent, of Royal iradas for the pardon of a number of persons sentenced by the military courts at Mosul, including the youth sentenced for participation in the murder of the British Consul at Mosul; Rashid Ali had already twice been dissuaded by me from doing this, but in November I was not informed of the intention; the official initiative came from the Ministry of Defence.

9. In this letter I am concerned only with the public manifestation of the tendency under discussion, and not with intrigues that may have been going on underground. It is sufficient to say that, although the Palestine theme almost ceased to be mentioned in the press and in conversation, it was only to be expected in the circumstances that relations between the Italian Legation, the Mufti and anti-British elements both in the Cabinet and outside should become closer and closer; further reference is made to this point below.

(B)

10. I had intended at this point to give two enlightening examples of eccentric behaviour by the Cabinet, but omit them in the interest of brevity.

11. On the 28th October Italy attacked Greece. By the end of November it was clear not only that Italy had suffered a serious military set-back, but that the German diplomatic efforts in the Balkans, which had been watched with anxious interest, had also failed. General Wavell's offensive began on the 9th December and the next two months were marked by the crescendo of victories in Africa. Yet eccentric behaviour continued and the political scene in Iraq appeared on the surface even more stormy than before. The reasons for this can best be studied under the next main heading, together with the reasons for the survival of the Cabinet until the last day of January 1941.

(C)

12. The Cabinet, as I have said, ought by all the rules to have died of its own inherent weakness last September or earlier. On the 27th September the Regent returned from the north to the capital determined to get rid of the Prime Minister as soon as possible. The displeasure of His Majesty's Government with the un-ally-like conduct of Iraq can be said to have come to a head on the 26th November, when you informed Rashid Ali that they had lost all confidence in any Cabinet under his leadership, an intimation understood to mean that Rashid Ali must go. Soon after, the Regent told the Cabinet openly that he wished them to resign, but without result. The survival of Rashid Ali as Prime Minister till the 31st January, 1941, must be explained in terms of the characters of the principal persons concerned, beginning with himself.

13. Rashid Ali was once described to me by the present French Minister very aptly as *un fauve*. In times of stress there comes into his eyes a look that is familiar to those of us who have had to deal with untutored tribesmen who have never seen a town or had contact with civilised humanity, a look of combined fear, cunning and savagery. This former professor of the Law School, member of the Court of Appeal and Minister of State and Prime Minister of many years' experience would make an interesting subject for the study of the influence of environment in childhood on the character of the adult. As a Minister he has frequently shown himself obstinate and incredibly reckless of consequences, the kind of man who, as the Persian saying goes, would set fire to the bazaars in order to steal a handkerchief under cover of the smoke. He is vain and susceptible to flattery.

From the end of November onwards the Prime Minister was like a tiger at bay, with fangs bared and claws unsheathed, determined to do anything rather than resign. He sought to support his position by whipping-up nationalist indignation against foreign interference, by having round-robins of support prepared in the streets and coffee-shops, by calling the military to arms or by begging the Italian Legation for Axis support; indeed, by any method except the proper one of appealing to Parliament. For many weeks his principal colleagues were morally stopped from withdrawing their support owing to the fact that they had supported him in, or even urged him to, the policy which had got him into trouble (see below); but, finally, a point was reached beyond which they were not prepared to go. Even after they had withdrawn (the 26th January, 1941), he defied constitutional precedent by refusing to resign and trying to form a new Cabinet without a renewed mandate from the Regent; he used military pressure to try to coerce the Regent into dissolving Parliament;

even after the departure of the Regent to Diwaniya Rashid Ali seems to have considered the possibility of setting up a military dictatorship. Finally, he only capitulated in the face of threats from two of his four new blackleg Ministers to resign without him, and of news from Diwaniya that the army there and the Shia tribes were solid behind the Regent.

The danger of the situation was thus due almost entirely to the reckless character of the Prime Minister and his determination to stay in office whatever the cost. In the country at large the factors making for an improvement in a sense favourable to Great Britain were steadily at work, though obscured by the storm in the capital.

14. For the last two years the most important personage in the Iraqi political scene has undoubtedly been Taha-al-Hashimi. If I am about to give him a bad name it is not for the purpose of hanging him without further trial; but it is only in the light of his past that it is possible to form an idea of what he is likely to do, and, indeed, of what can be reasonably expected of him in the future.

Taha Pasha became Chief of the General Staff in December 1929 and, as far as I remember, retained this office without interruption until the Bekir Sidqi coup of October 1936; he remained in exile until after the murder of Bekir on the 12th August, 1937; on his return became president of the Palestine Defence Society, a post which he only relinquished when he became Minister of Defence in Nuri Pasha's Cabinet on the 25th December, 1938.

During his seven years as Chief of the Imperial General Staff Taha Pasha left nothing undone to obtain for the army a dominating voice in the internal administration of the country, until to-day no branch of the Administration is free for military interference. The Military Intelligence Department has become a kind of Gestapo; it is not uncommon for civil officials of high rank to be dismissed on the report of a young ignorant intelligence officer, while delation to the same source is a simple means of sending personal rivals to three years' preventive custody. As a good example of military interference in a purely civil matter it may be mentioned that it was as the result of pressure from the Ministry of Defence that the Law for the Restriction of Trades to Iraqis, which had laid dormant in the statute books since March 1936, was finally brought into force by the issue of the necessary regulation in August 1940. Another scheme of Taha Pasha's, which, however, has never matured, has been the "creation of a gendarmerie," which, in effect, meant the transfer of the greater part of the police to the control of the Ministry of Defence. Finally, after the outbreak of war, Taha Pasha, by means of Ordinance No. 56 of 1939 for the Defence of the State, secured for himself the control of many branches of the civil Administration.

After his appointment as Minister of Defence Taha Pasha had proceeded to consolidate his own position by an ingenious system of collective security; he appointed to the principal combatant commands in the capital four officers of extreme nationalistic and anti-British complexion; while he kept them in their commands, they intervened to prevent any change of Cabinet which might result in the removal of Taha from the Ministry of Defence. Previous references to these officers and their influence will be found in my letter of the 27th June, 1940, paragraphs 3 and 5, and my letter of the 10th October, 1940, paragraph 7. During recent weeks the troops have on several occasions been ordered to "stand-to" at night as a gesture of support to the threatened Cabinet; for example, for several days from the 28th November, again about the 15th January, when Rashid Ali seemed about to resign. This system of collective security probably received a rude shock in the last weeks of January, when the troops "stood-to" on the orders of Rashid Ali without the knowledge of the Minister of Defence, and when the Sinister Quadrumvirate sided with Rashid Ali, as against Taha, after the latter's resignation; it was also probably a blow to his confidence when he realised in what close touch the officers were with the Mufti independently of himself.

It was Taha Pasha, too, who first in 1935 used the army as a lever for upsetting a Cabinet when he informed Jamil-al-Madfai that the army would not march against the Euphrates tribes, who had been stirred up to revolt by his brother Yasin, Rashid Ali and Hikmat Sulaiman, and so made way for his brother's premiership. He thereby set an example which was improved upon by Bekir Sidqi in 1936 and which led to the chronic condition of to-day.

The army is notoriously a foyer of hostility to Great Britain; this hostility has long been fed on the resentment aroused by allegations that His Majesty's Government have deliberately kept the army short of arms and equipment. I find

in my diary, under the 30th October, 1936, the following passage in the note of a conversation with a highly placed personage:—

"... Taha had for long been putting about propaganda to the effect that the British were deliberately keeping the army short of munitions, and the officers believed it."

The Palestine Defence Society undoubtedly benefited considerably from German funds. Taha Pasha, who was president of the society in 1938, is a close friend of Dr. Amin Ruwaiha, Dr. Grobba's chief propagandist and paymaster (I do not know whether the friendship was of older standing or whether it first blossomed at this time). When the Mufti arrived in Bagdad it was only natural that the ex-President and his four officers should establish particularly close contacts with him; Taha was, in fact, the protagonist in the Cabinet of the policy of blackmailing His Majesty's Government into making concessions over the constitutional development of Palestine; he was in virtual control of the press during its most offensive period through the Director-General of Press and Propaganda, his nominee Majid-al-Hashimi, the adherent of Kamil Shabib of the Sinister Quadrumvirate; the four officers were among the principal advocates of a resumption of relations with Germany.

15. Naji Shawkat is a regular Cassius; for some years past he has been growing leaner and deafer; both his brothers hold German decorations. When he returned from Turkey to join Nuri Pasha's Cabinet in December 1938 he was a very different man from the Naji Shawkat of a few years before. As Minister of the Interior he was responsible for allowing, and, indeed, encouraging, in April 1939, the student demonstrations in Bagdad and Mosul, the second of which led to the murder of the British Consul. In the same month Nuri Pasha dismissed him from the Cabinet by methods not entirely frank. When he joined the Cabinet of Rashid Ali his personal animosity reinforced his natural tendency to oppose in the Cabinet the policy of which Nuri was the exponent; he was, for instance, the one who was principally responsible for the "postponement" at the Cabinet meeting of the 17th June, 1940, of a decision on Nuri's proposal to break off relations with Italy; the arch-defeatist he became the Laval of the Cabinet, the principal advocate of reinsuring with the Axis, and, as such, undertook the mission to Istanbul. Throughout December and January he was the most ardent supporter of Rashid Ali in his intransigent refusal to resign.

16. Umar Nadhmi, the Minister of Communications and Works, was a civil servant until he joined Nuri Pasha's Cabinet in December 1938; he has been a personal friend of mine since 1922, when he was a comparatively junior judge in the provinces, and often speaks to me with engaging frankness. He comes from the half-Turkish half-Kurdish township of Kifri; he is free of any trace of morbid pan-Arab nationalism, and Palestine does not interest him. It is, therefore, curious that during the past few months he should have been associated more and more with Taha Pasha in the internal groupings of the Cabinet. The explanation probably is that, essentially a moderate man, he recognised in Taha a certain realism and stability entirely lacking in the other leading members of the Cabinet, Rashid Ali, Naji Shawkat and Naji Suwaidi (Nuri Pasha though in the Cabinet was hardly of it). It was the resignation of these two (with Sadiq Bassam, who follows Taha unquestioningly) on the 26th January which undermined Rashid Ali's position, though it took the Regent's departure for Diwaniya on the 30th to topple him over.

17. Of Nuri Pasha in this connexion it is hardly necessary to say more than that in some ways he unwittingly contributed not only to keep Rashid Ali in, but even to exacerbate his anti-British policy. The Regent's anger and even the displeasure of His Majesty's Government were attributed to his intrigues or misrepresentations; there was a tendency in the Cabinet to refuse his proposals merely because they came from him (see my letter of the 27th June, 1940, paragraph 2); the leaders of the Opposition also, Jamil Madfai, Tewfiq Suwaidi, and the like, were undoubtedly deterred from working for Rashid Ali's fall partly by the feeling that they would thereby only be pulling Nuri's chestnuts out of the fire for him. Throughout the period under review Nuri seemed to retain the illusion that he and Taha Pasha were working closely and harmoniously together.

(D)

18. We are now on the crest of an unmistakable wave of success in Africa. The principal factor which has hitherto prevented this success from being reflected in the Iraqi political situation has been eliminated. I had intended to end this letter, under this heading, with an attempt to assess the probability or

otherwise of a more enthusiastic implementation of the alliance than heretofore. I see pointers in both directions. But since any such assessment at the present stage must be pure conjecture and this letter is already far too long, I will defer the task to a future occasion. I must only recall what I said at the beginning of paragraph 14, that I was not raking up the new Prime Minister's past with the intention of giving him a bad name and hanging him without further trial.

Yours sincerely,

C. J. EDMONDS.

[E 1311/1/93]

No. 10.

Sir B. Newton to Mr. Eden.—(Received April 7.)

(No. 89.)
Sir,

Bagdad, March 1, 1941.

A MONTH has passed since General Taha-al-Hashimi became Prime Minister, and it is well to consider what his Cabinet has achieved and what course it is likely to try to follow in the future.

2. The two principal tasks which lay before the new Prime Minister when he came into office on the 1st February were to improve relations with His Majesty's Government and to curb the power of the military clique which had played so prominent and so unconstitutional a part in the events which led up to Rashid Ali's resignation.

3. Up to the present he has done little to dispose of either. There is some negative improvement in his attitude as compared with that of Rashid Ali—he does not seem to be intriguing so directly with the Axis or to be in such close collusion with the military clique—but he has taken no positive steps either to give satisfaction to the more pressing requests of His Majesty's Government or to prevent further interference from the army in the government of the country.

4. In his short speech to the Chamber when Parliament was adjourned for twenty days on the 6th February he accepted the somewhat ambiguous statement of foreign policy made by his predecessor, and in the programme given to the Chamber on the 22nd February (my telegram No. 159 of the 23rd February) the same principles were reaffirmed. There is excellent reason to believe that he sought Rashid Ali's approval of the Cabinet's programme in draft, and at Rashid Ali's instance added a reference to the "national mission undertaken by Iraq."

5. When he first took office General Taha seems to have hoped that the unfortunate impression made on His Majesty's Government by Rashid Ali's Administration would be effaced merely by a change of Government and without a specific advance towards the satisfaction of British requirements. It has since been made clear to him that this was a mistake, but he has not yet shown himself capable of taking the remedial action which the situation demands. Even in the comparatively small and quite straightforward matter of the appointment of a British Director-General of Railways, Taha Pasha's Cabinet has attempted to continue the tactics of evasion and delay adopted since last summer.

6. One of the Prime Minister's chief difficulties is his fear of Rashid Ali and his supporters, but instead of dealing with this danger by taking the initiative in the attack, he is looking for compromise and appeasement. His attitude towards the military clique is similarly irresolute.

7. As I have already reported in my telegram No. 148, I have spoken to both the Prime Minister and the Minister for Foreign Affairs very plainly about the responsibilities of the new Government for remedying the mistakes of their predecessors and for preventing a resumption by a few officers of the political activities which recently threatened the stability of the Iraqi State and prejudiced the good relations of Iraq with Great Britain. I have also maintained pressure on the new Cabinet to bring them to break off diplomatic relations with Italy, but, quite apart from his personal inclinations to sit firmly on the fence, Taha-al-Hashimi has evidently not the strength of mind to face the storm which he fears that the Mufti and the army clique would raise if he were to give the Italian Legation their passports. In this he shows himself to be not only timid but also a poor judge of a political situation, for there is small doubt but that he could rally to his support most of the Senators and Deputies and the best and strongest tribal elements in the provinces for a determined blow at army interference in politics. Taufiq Suwaidi, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, and perhaps the only man in the Cabinet capable of influencing the Prime Minister, takes a somewhat

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different view from his chief. He sincerely wishes to keep the army out of politics and is perhaps ready himself to face a break with Italy.

8. In the debate on the Government's programme which took place in the Chamber on the 24th February (my despatch No. 88 of the 27th February) the Prime Minister came under fire both from the supporters of Rashid Ali and from those who are anxious to see effective action taken to put a stop to military interference in politics. To the former, who challenged his earlier denial of Rashid Ali's allegation that the resignation of the late Cabinet had been brought about by foreign influence, he replied by reasserting his view that Rashid Ali and his colleagues had resigned because the Regent had refused a dissolution and to the latter, who demanded guarantees that recent deplorable events would not be repeated, he offered an assurance that it would be his purpose to uphold the constitutional authority of Parliament. This assurance is, I am told, regarded as being of little value by the majority of the Chamber, but in the opinion of most Deputies there is no likelihood that the matter will be carried to the point of a vote of confidence. Only about two weeks remain of the present session, and the general opinion seems to be that Parliament, though thoroughly dissatisfied with the Government's lack of a firm policy, will go into recess without attempting to force a change.

9. Outside Parliament it seems that Rashid Ali, with his following of pan-Arab extremists and pro-Nazi elements and the four senior officers who are the leaders of the army clique, remain in close touch with each other and there is talk of plots to restore Rashid Ali to power. There is also ground for the belief that Rashid Ali is seeking, though probably without much success, to consolidate a personal backing among certain tribal elements in the middle Euphrates. His principal confederate in this movement appears to be Sheikh Abdul Wahid of the Fatlah.

10. On the other hand, Jamil Madfai and his numerous political and tribal friends and supporters continue to work for action against the military clique and for a better understanding with Great Britain.

11. In the light of the facts reviewed above, it seems that Taha Pasha can only find active support by giving satisfaction to either Rashid Ali or Jamil Madfai. So far he has hesitated between the two and has been unable to satisfy either, but, in spite of the consequent weakness of his position, he will probably try to steer a middle course until war developments in the spring show on which side it will be safe to put the helm hard over. General Taha is certainly an improvement on his predecessor and may be given credit by us for having been attacked recently on the German radio. Nevertheless, it is impossible to repose confidence in him, and if the result of our pressure is to expedite his resignation, this should clear the way for a worthier successor.

12. I am sending copies of this despatch to His Majesty's representatives at Cairo, Angora, Tehran and Jedda, to the Government of India, to His Majesty's High Commissioner for Palestine and Transjordan, and to the Combined Middle East Intelligence Centre, Cairo.

I have, &c.
BASIL NEWTON.

[E 1333/1/93]

No. 11.

Sir B. Newton to Mr. Eden.—(Received April 8.)

(No. 101.)

Sir,

Bagdad, March 8, 1941.

WITH reference to my despatch No. 91 of the 6th March informing you of the debate which took place in the Chamber on the programme of the new Government, I have the honour to transmit to you herewith a summary of the principal speeches delivered in the Senate during a debate on the same subject which took place on the 27th February. To simplify reading I have underlined⁽¹⁾ the chief points made by the speakers.

2. The speeches in the Senate were more definite and forceful than those delivered in the Chamber, and brought out more clearly many of the points which have been emphasised in private conversations by this embassy. Sharp attacks were made on the policy of the late Government, and the present Government were strongly criticised for failing to take proper steps to correct the errors of their predecessors. Jamil Madfai boldly declared that Iraq's national existence

⁽¹⁾ Printed in italics.

depended on her alliance with Great Britain, and turned the tables on those who had made insinuations of British interference by saying that on the contrary the interference and propaganda had come from the Axis and should be stopped. Jalal Baban exposed Rashid Ali's tergiversations, made a bold attack on the military clique and condemned the part played by teachers in encouraging the demonstrations planned as a protest against Rashid Ali's "forced" resignation. Nuri Said denounced the heresy of thinking that Iraq was a neutral in the present war.

3. Not a speaker supported Rashid Ali, his foreign policy or his attempt to browbeat the Regent; in the frankness with which they spoke their minds the Senators showed a moral courage which has seldom been equalled in the short history of this country. Nuri Said's championship of the policy of friendship with Britain and his call for guidance to public opinion, Ridha Shabib's bold demand for a definition of the "Iraq's national mission"—the latest pan-Arab cliché devised by Rashid Ali and forced by him on his successor—and Muhsin-al-Shilash's frank avowal that the British Government had given Iraq real freedom after her admission into the League of Nations, and that Iraq herself was therefore alone to blame for all her adversities, were all utterances which showed a determination to face the truth in a manner which has hitherto been noticeably rare in public life here.

4. Naji Suwaidi's speech requires explanation. His remarks about "the sudden declarations" made to the Iraqi Government refer presumably to the action which I took on the 25th November, 1940, when I informed the Regent and the Minister for Foreign Affairs that the elimination of Rashid Ali from the Government was essential if a serious crisis with His Majesty's Government was to be avoided, and acquainted them with the dissatisfaction with which His Majesty's Government had learned of the resumption of public telegraphic communication between Iraq and Germany. It had always been known that Naji Suwaidi was one of the Iraqi politicians who resented this action, and in his speech in the Chamber he maintained that it provided justification for Rashid Ali's allegation that his resignation had been caused by foreign interference. The Prime Minister himself took up this particular point, and it is satisfactory to see that he vindicated the action of His Majesty's Government in warning the Iraqi Government of "certain matters which might adversely affect the interests of the alliance."

5. I am sending a copy of this despatch to His Majesty's representatives at Angora and Jedda, to His Majesty's High Commissioner for Palestine and Transjordan, to the Government of India and to the Combined Middle East Intelligence Centre.

I have, &c.
BASIL NEWTON.

Enclosure in No. 11.

Proceedings of Parliament—the Senate—February 27, 1941.

(Meeting at which the Senate discussed the Cabinet's Programme of Policy.)

THE following is a translation of noteworthy speeches made at the above meeting and since published in the local press:—

The Prime Minister, Taha-al-Hashimi.

The Cabinet's programme of policy, which has already been laid before the Chamber of Deputies, has now been distributed to you, and I beg leave of the House to say that I am prepared to answer any questions concerning the programme and make any explanations that may be asked for.

Jamil-al-Madfai.

We have read the programme, and we find it lacking in clarity in many respects, notwithstanding his Excellency the Prime Minister's declaration that he loves frankness.

In any case, I am of opinion that it is not programmes that matter, but deeds and achievements. We trust that the present Cabinet will so act as to retrieve the many mistakes of the past.

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In a previous statement his Excellency the Prime Minister made a remark suggesting that there was no propaganda or foreign interference. *I regret to say that I disagree with his Excellency on this point, for propaganda exists in fact together with foreign intrigues, and tens of thousands of dinars are being spent for these purposes.* I fear lest the contention that nothing of the sort exists should mean that we are not going to adopt a resolute policy for the repression of promoters of propaganda and intrigues, which might lead to the destruction of our national existence.

Gentlemen, our political position is well known and so are our economic interests and our geographical situation. *As I pointed out on a previous occasion, our national existence stands on three main planks, of which one is the alliance with Britain.* Since the conclusion of that alliance things have been going on smoothly, good accord and understanding prevailing between the two parties, and throughout the period of alliance nothing occurred between ourselves and our Ally of a nature calculated to violate or infringe our independence, nor has there been any interference in our domestic affairs. *But foreign propaganda agents, seeking to take advantage of the simplicity and good-heartedness of Iraqis and concerned only with promoting the policy and interests of the particular countries on behalf of which they act, even though their activities might spell death and destruction for other nations and peoples, have been promoting and inspiring the evil idea that there has been interference on the part of our Ally and demands of a nature which the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty neither upholds nor justifies.* Both myself and certain members of the Chamber of Deputies, including, as far as I can remember, his Excellency Saiyid Abdul Mahdi, asked questions concerning rumours about such demands at the Finance Committee of the Chamber. The Prime Minister at the time denied that there had been any interference or demands of a nature calculated to bring about misunderstanding between ourselves and our Ally. But hardly had a few days elapsed on that denial of his than the former Prime Minister again alleged that among the reasons for his resignation was foreign interference, seeking thereby to justify the errors committed during his administration.

Gentlemen, it is absolutely inadmissible for us to delay or shirk the adoption of a resolute policy for the suppression of this propaganda, which is detrimental to the existence of the State. Likewise, it is absolutely inadmissible for us to throw ashes over a fire and declare that the fire was non-existent.

Gentlemen, a fire exists, and it must be extinguished lest it should get alive again and spread about upon some opportunity afforded it.

I confidently hope that the men now in power will succeed in the adoption of such policy. We shall support them with all our might as long as we see them seeking the realisation of the aims and objects dictated by the country's interest.

Naji-al-Suwaidi.

The explanation of programmes of policy and the answer to questions raised in connexion with such explanations are matters for the Prime Minister responsible for such policy. The former Prime Minister not being a member of this House, while I myself had been driven by circumstances to serve on the last Cabinet, I consider it my duty to explain to the House certain points which I consider should be explained.

The causes of the resignation of the last Cabinet, which have given rise to so many rumours and unfounded statements, are not attributable to any essential difference about the provisions of the treaty or any other instrument. As was desired by members of the House, the last Cabinet pursued a policy of mutual co-operation and collaboration among its leading members and the country's prominent leaders. That policy aimed at the maintenance of peace, tranquillity and stability in the country during the violent world struggle. Getting into touch with the Majlis, we found that that body, with the public opinion behind it, upheld that policy and the course it followed. *Matters continued like that until that sudden declaration which followed the stand taken by the former Government in advocating slow deliberation over the question of severing relations with the Italian Government following the declaration of war by the latter against the Allies.* As Iraq had severed her relations with the German Government immediately upon the outbreak of war between Germany and the Allies, it was desired that we should act similarly in the case of Italy. We considered, however, that political circumstances required that we should proceed carefully and slowly about such a delicate course of policy, and should take no step before first ascertaining the likely consequences to the country of the decision which was to be taken.

Such were the causes of the first crisis, which gave rise to a variety of rumours, including one that certain propaganda was afoot of a nature calculated to lead the country to an unknown end.

When the Iraqi Government had suddenly sprung upon them "those declarations" they considered it their duty not to afford any opportunity for our national problems to take a course calculated to undermine the future existence of the State. For we had seen in the past that any Cabinet act involving a going back on the principles of independence would ultimately prove disastrous for the country, constituting a precedent which would be seized upon by the adversary to strike the nation and the country.

Observers can rightly claim that the recent crisis between the "higher quarters in the State" and the Government was not the outcrop of foreign interference. Developments had led to personal rivalry and personal disputes. Nevertheless, the fact is that the causes of the last events lay in the original crisis.

By our stand we wished to show our ally that the Iraqisation is independent in her affairs. *I regret, however, to say that following on the acquisition by her of the status of an independent State, by her admission into the League of Nations under the provisions of the last Anglo-Iraqi Treaty, Iraq failed fully to exercise her rights as an independent State, and neither the people nor foreign Governments had impressed upon them the fact that the State of Iraq is a fully independent State.*

I contend before this House that the stand taken by Iraq over the question of severance of relations with Italy was a cause for general gratification in Iraq, inspired complete confidence in the Government, and served to prove that Iraq had a "political existence" which she is able to demonstrate by the exercise of her political and administrative rights as an independent State.

It is contended, on the other hand, that that stand on the part of Iraq has had the result of enabling the adversaries to disseminate propaganda harmful to the policy of our ally and also to the policy of Iraq. This is a question of administration, responsibility for which rests upon the departments and Ministers concerned. At the same time it must be noted that propaganda has not been confined to one party. It is a weapon which both parties have been using here as well as elsewhere.

The former Cabinet took no rash or imprudent acts of a nature calculated to undermine the existence of Iraq. They only sought to keep Iraq away from the calamities of war and to avoid getting involved in the violent struggle between powerful nations.

As to the question of upholding the rights of the nation and of the legislature, with which rights certain quarters and forces have, it is said, been interfering, we all know that Iraq is a constitutional parliamentary State in which affairs cannot proceed properly unless equilibrium is maintained between the legislative and executive powers. *All of us are, however, aware of the fact that all the higher quarters and forces in the State have acted together for the suppression of Parliament and the rights of the people and have sought to deny Parliament all opportunity properly to carry out its mission of representing the people.* As a result that authority, which we had intended to establish as the "supreme authority and arbitrator in the State" has become ineffective. Successive Iraqi Governments, including the present Government, failed to think of restoring to the legislative power its prestige and influence. *Unless that power has its prestige and prerogatives restored to it, we shall never be secure against other Powers interfering and controlling the affairs of the State, as the case is at present.* On the contrary, we shall have to expect such interference from all sorts of quarters as may choose to interfere. There has already been interference of this kind by armed tribes, which was followed by similar interference by another armed force which came to strike those tribes. If we wish to remove this second force from the field, we must set up in its stead another force—that of the people. Unless the Legislature is accorded its right of self-defence, whereby a balance of powers will be established in the State, some other force is bound to emerge and take over control of the affairs of the State by constitutional or other means.

Responsible men should, therefore, consider the setting up of a "popular force" to uphold the Legislature, acting as supreme controlling authority over the Government and doing what is necessary in the interest of the country.

This is all the information I have to give to the House to show the good intentions I and my colleagues had. If we have erred in any respect, well different people take different views of things, and everyone has his own views.

Jalal Baban.

I must thank his Excellency Al Suwaidi for the explanations he has made, for these explanations afford us opportunity to speak.

I do not deny that it is necessary to act together and oppose unjustifiable foreign demands and also to assume before the foreigner the attitude of one who is strong and independent. On the other hand, we must not forget that it is equally necessary to ensure good understanding and keep the way open for the purpose as may be necessary in the interest of the country. If we review the political history of nations, we shall find many instances of a Cabinet having been changed to ensure understanding sought in the interest of the country concerned.

As regards the proceedings of the former Cabinet, I do not wish to deal with this subject at great length. I would, therefore, begin from a certain point, namely, that Sunday meeting of the Cabinet at which his Excellency Al Hashimi spoke, declaring: "It has become necessary for us to resign, our continuing in office having become detrimental to the public interest." This declaration by his Excellency Al Hashimi was received with approval by all his colleagues. Subsequently, the Cabinet, with the exception of its chief, decided to resign. Taking this event as a starting-point, I may now continue. Following on the Cabinet's decision to resign, we saw a new chapter open at sunset and close at sunrise on the following day. With the close of that chapter a further painful one was opened. It was a chapter to be deplored by all Iraqis, for with it we reverted to the errors of the past, which we much needed avoiding. But how could those errors of the past be avoided, when some ones, as we have seen, would not hesitate for a moment to take any action agreeable to their own desires no matter how harmful such action might be for the State.

These sufferings began with the event of the 29th October, 1936, known as the military coup d'Etat, and the disastrous and unfortunate acts which characterised that event, such as hangings and martial law. The army was innocent of that event. I say so although I was abroad at the time. On my return home I made enquiries and found that the army was innocent of that coup d'Etat, which was a painful movement undertaken by a handful of individuals acting for the furtherance of their purely individual aims. The movement, which had nothing to do whatever with the public interest, was unfortunately ascribed to the army.

Gentlemen, I believe that the honour of military officers is such as forbids them to allow themselves to act as tools of individuals seeking to exploit the army for their own personal benefit. A military officer believes that he is born to serve his country—and his country alone—and not to serve private individuals and undermine the existence of the State in the service of personal interests.

I do not wish to hold in review past painful events, which began to be repeated of late. I beg leave of my colleague, his Excellency Nuri-al-Said, to say that even his fourth Cabinet was formed on the same lines. I say so, though it may hurt his Excellency, because I feel I must frankly state the truth, in order that we shall take lesson and be on our guard lest past painful events should be repeated.

I shall now turn to another page of painful events: The former Cabinet resigned on Friday. In the afternoon and evening of that day handbills indicating the time and places for a demonstration against the new Government were distributed by individuals moving about either on foot or in motor cars. On the following day meetings for demonstration purposes were held, but only in Government schools by the students of such schools. It is to be deplored that Government school students should embark on such activities.

The Cabinet has been in office for over twenty days, almost a month, but has taken no action to indicate that it intends putting an end to such lamentable proceedings.

Gentlemen, the school students are themselves innocent of such activities. They must have been driven on that course by others. Now who can these others be? I have little doubt that it was some schoolmasters who had instigated the students. Where is the Ministry of Education? Will that Ministry continue to maintain silence in the face of such proceedings? Does she propose to promote the spirit of chaos among the rising generation?

I do not propose to speak at length about the Cabinet's programme of policy, for it is acts and deeds and not programmes that really matter, and I expect good and wholesome deeds from the Hashimi Cabinet, and also the suppression of all harmful activities.

In their programme of policy the Cabinet speak of their desire that the Houses of Parliament shall exercise a controlling influence over the acts of the Government. We, however, find that the first action taken by the Government following on their declaration to this effect has been to prohibit the publication of statements made in the Chamber of Deputies, not a word of which has been published in the papers.

Someone may perhaps contend, as some did on certain previous occasions, that it is up to newspapers themselves to publish or not to publish such statements. I, however, feel convinced that had newspapers been allowed to publish these statements they would have published them to the last word and letter.

I now wish to go back to the deplorable events of the past, which I hope will not be repeated in future. I fervently request the responsible ones, in particular the Minister of Defence, to put a definite end to proceedings of the nature alluded to. I join his Excellency Al Madfai in his remark that we must not cover the fire with ashes and then declare that there is no fire.

I am afraid that, if we continue to hide fire with ashes, we shall one day regret this sort of conduct on our part, but regret would then be of no avail.

Ridha-al-Shabibi.

I had liked to declare myself content with the valuable words of his Excellency Al Madfai in which he expressed his views on Iraq's foreign relations and on the form which, according to his convictions, these relations should assume. But I altered my mind upon hearing the speech made by his Excellency Al Suwaidi countering the views on Iraq's foreign policy put forward by his Excellency Al Madfai. I myself belong to the group of men who have been maintaining an attitude of strict neutrality in regard to the present war and international struggle. I was, and am still, of opinion that Iraq's interest lies entirely in her leaders adopting and always maintaining the same attitude in both their utterances and their acts.

We, however, observe that since the outbreak of the war our country has been, it is to be deplored, divided into two camps, one upholding one party to the war and one the other. Rival propaganda has no doubt been influential in bringing about this dissension.

I would like to ask Al Suwaidi to say whether foreign propaganda has been free from bias, and whether it has not, on certain occasions, constituted a danger to Iraq and a factor making for the confusion of public opinion. I earnestly pray Al Suwaidi to answer this question frankly, for it is not in the interest of our country to keep facts concealed.

Gentlemen, the Chamber now faces a new Cabinet, the fourth, I believe, since 1939.

The Cabinet which relinquished office on the 25th December, 1938, advocated a policy of "Let bygones be bygones." Opposition politicians and succeeding Cabinets criticised that policy and condemned it, and the struggle between the advocates of that policy and those who oppose it has continued ever since, though occasionally taking an unopen form.

I have no desire to point out the methods and means resorted to by certain Cabinets to secure office. These are too well known to need pointing out. I would, however, like to point out that the period I am speaking of was characterised by a series of trials and errors, as a result of which the country has suffered considerably. The history of that period, however, testifies to the wholesome nature of the policy of "Let bygones be bygones" and to the spirit of genuine patriotism and appreciation of the public interest which inspired that policy.

Gentlemen, one cannot leave the subject without taking up the last major crisis which led to the present Cabinet taking over the reins of public affairs.

That crisis persisted for some three or four months. It was at last declared that the continuance in power of the last Cabinet was no longer desirable, and the Cabinet collapsed in the manner known to you after having committed so many errors. Then came the present Cabinet with its programme of policy which is now before you.

The opening clause in the Cabinet's programme of policy provides for the discharge of the national mission Iraq has taken upon herself to carry through, and also for the consolidation of relations with the sister Arab countries.

It is good that Iraq should have a national policy. Having, however, pledged myself to be frank, I suggest that we should first come to agreement over the significance of the term "national mission" or "national policy." Because of the strong bearing this mission or policy has on our national existence and our political and social affairs, it forms one of the most important questions being

discussed in this Assembly and by the people and in the press. *What, I wonder, does this so-called "national mission" consist of? I have observed that there are some who believe that stigmatising one's own compatriots close at home and showing animosity and dislike for them on the ground of showing sympathy with more-distant kinsmen is not a thing incompatible with the "national mission."* (? A sly allusion to anti-Shia spirit among Sunnis in Iraq—Translator.) Such is the logic of the hallucinated and the fanciful—a vicious logic which continues a factor making for dissension in this country. When we, together with the fair-minded ones, declared that it was disastrous for Iraq to give such interpretation to nationalism, they refused to be convinced.

Besides, there are certain newspapers, both here and abroad, who wish to live on ill-gotten money.

The Government should therefore decide upon a sound definition of national policy, free from fantastic conceptions and of practicable character, in which regard should be had to conditions in Iraq and the special interests of this country. I much wish responsible men would show a great measure of frankness on this subject.

We view with approbation the Government's determined resolve to uphold the provisions of the Constitution and to strengthen parliamentary life. We do not, however, wish that parliamentary life should be a mere form or show and an exhibition of dolls manipulated by individuals. We want the institution of Parliament to be an effective factor working for the upliftment of the country and the warding-off of the danger of tyranny. Parliamentary life should ensure respect for rights and liberties, in particular, freedom of opinion and freedom of the press.

Recently the publication was prohibited of the proceedings of the Legislature. This prohibition has no parallel except in the reign of Abdul Hamid. I wish the Prime Minister would state his views on the subject clearly, for the Cabinet's programme of policy is ambiguous on this point.

Nuri-al-Said.

After a general reference to recent events in Iraq, Nuri-al-Said wished the meeting was *in camera* in order that he might speak with greater freedom and then proceeded as follows, referring to the speech of Naji-al-Suwaidi:—

His Excellency (Naji-al-Suwaidi) opened his speech by ascribing the cause of the crisis to the failure to break off relations with the Italian Government. Gentlemen, I assure you that the question of breaking off relations with the Italian Government was not the direct cause of that violent crisis.

When, in June last, Italy entered the war, we discussed at the Council of Ministers the advisability of proceeding slowly about the breaking-off of relations with Italy, on two grounds: firstly, the collapse of France, following which it was difficult to appraise the position of Britain, and, secondly, the desire on our part to ascertain the attitude of the Egyptian and Turkish Governments. So we decided to wait for a while until the situation created by France's collapse had been cleared up and the attitude of Egypt and Turkey had become clear. Accordingly, to speak of the non-breaking-off of relations with Italy as having been the direct cause of the crisis is incorrect.

During the six months which followed that decision nothing arose between the British Embassy and the Iraqi Government of a nature suggesting that any problems had arisen on account of the said decision. The crisis had existed long before that date. During the course of last summer we made attempts at solving these crises, undertaking for the purpose several journeys by air and rail. These crises, however, had nothing to do with our relations with Italy or any other country, nor with any interference on the part of the British Embassy, as some believe or claim.

Gentlemen, Iraq's relations with Britain are relations of alliance, determined by treaty, and, contrary to the views advanced by some, Iraq cannot adopt an attitude of neutrality so long as the Treaty of Alliance stands and is not denounced or altered by either party. It is not right that we should impress upon public opinion the wrong idea that we are neutrals. The treaty defines our obligations in time of war as well as in time of peace, and in the war our country is a non-belligerent State.

It is true that we are an independent State and that every such State can dispose of its affairs as it likes. But should the fact that we are conscious of our independence induce us to neglect thinking about our interests, instead of acting to remove such harm as our country may suffer and to promote further its welfare?

If we find that certain activities calculated to create for us difficulties with our Ally are incompatible with our general policy, we should take steps to suppress such activities. An independent country must discharge its responsibilities at a time such as the present and the leaders of such country must enlighten public opinion and not allow it to grope about in darkness. If any man among the men of Iraq has any new policy, other than the one just alluded to, and he believes it to be in the interests of Iraq, then let such man boldly and courageously reveal that policy of his. I have not, however, come across or heard of any man in Iraq, whether in a place of responsibility or otherwise, who differs from the one commonly held view that Iraq must maintain the policy of alliance with Britain and avoid any act likely to prove detrimental to that policy and, ultimately, to the interest of Iraq.

Being as we are all agreed upon that course of policy, it only remains for us courageously and frankly to follow it, affording no opportunity for action by those wishing to play foul with the country's destinies.

Gentlemen, so much for our relations with the British Government. As regards present policy and the immediate future, by which latter term I refer to the time when the present war is over, I am among those who believe that the present world situation affords a great opportunity for all peoples, particularly small ones, to obtain a larger measure of justice than they were able to obtain in the past. It would appear to me that "matters" [*sic*] will no longer remain in the hands of one nation or of a limited number of nations, but that all the nations of the world, including the peoples of the American Continent, will enter the field. We must, therefore, seek to prepare for ourselves conditions better than those in which we have lived in the past and secure for ourselves a greater position than that we were able to secure in the past . . .

This State is founded on a Constitution in which Parliament forms the corner-stone. In recent years a series of events took place in which Parliament was smitten and dissolved. At the time some of those events happened I myself was among those responsible for the course followed. Parliament has become incapable of functioning. Upon careful consideration we shall find that the cause for this lies in the Electoral Law, which dates back to eighty years ago. Parliament cannot truly represent public opinion unless the existing Electoral Law is replaced by a new law fashioned on more up-to-date lines. *Unless a Deputy feels that he had been elected exclusively by the will of the people, and not as a nominee of the Government, and that if he leaves his seat as a result of the dissolution of the Chamber he would be re-elected and reinstated by the people, he cannot speak frankly and insist on his views or offer opposition to the Government when he sees the latter depart from the constitutional and other laws, nor would he withdraw his confidence from the Government and bring about its downfall. Without such conviction on the part of its members Parliament cannot truly represent the nation.*

NOTE.—The remainder of Nuri Pasha's speech is devoted to emphasising the above point about strengthening the hand of Parliament to enable it to exercise the necessary check upon the proceedings of the Executive.

The Prime Minister, Taha-al-Hashimi.

After thanking Senators for their speeches and remarks, the Prime Minister proceeded as follows:—

The first point I wish to take up is the remark made that the Cabinet's programme of policy is ambiguous, and that it is complementary to the programme of the former Cabinet. There is nothing in the programme to show that it is complementary to that of the former Cabinet. It only says that the Cabinet will carry through certain portions of the programme of the former Cabinet which accorded with the wishes of the nation and remained on hand unattended to. A change of Cabinet does not mean undoing useful work accomplished by the outgoing Cabinet.

The second point I wish to take up is that concerning foreign propaganda. In my recent statement in Parliament and on the 6th February I did not suggest that there was no foreign propaganda about. I only said that the resignation of the Cabinet was not due to foreign influence at play.

In all countries, no matter how strong and independent or how solidly united the people might be, foreign propaganda agents are maintained to undertake the propaganda on behalf of other countries interested. As you know from the experience of the last war, the weapon of propaganda is made use of by all nations. *So propaganda is an unavoidable evil, but, no matter how extensive*

propaganda might be, it is of no consequence for a solidly united nation whose solidarity will render it immune against propaganda.

His Excellency Senator Al Suwaidi, not being in a place of responsibility, deemed it fit to raise and discuss certain questions which a person in a place of responsibility would hesitate to discuss in great detail. *Nevertheless, I can declare that a party to an alliance is entitled, even in time of peace, to invite the attention of his ally to certain matters which he considers might adversely affect the interests covered by the alliance. The case is even more so in time of war.*

As regards the other point raised by his Excellency Al Suwaidi, namely, that about "sudden declarations," *I would point out that a written statement was tendered in which the attention of the Iraqi Government was invited to two matters. Apart from that statement in writing, there was nothing but verbal talks of which no written record was made. It may be claimed otherwise. This, however, does not matter. What matters is that the Iraqi Government have a right to protest against foreign interference.*

As I pointed out at the Chamber of Deputies, our national existence was established by sacrifices made by the sons of this country, and it must be maintained and safeguarded. We are unwilling that a Government should rise or resign by foreign influence.

His Excellency Senator Jalal Baban drew the attention of the Government to the question of handbills and demonstrations. The Government have caused enquiries to be made into the case with a view to discovering the instigators, and, if any officials are found to have been guilty of instigations, the Government will not fail to take disciplinary action against them.

His Excellency Senator Jalal Baban, and also his Excellency Senator Al Shabibi, raised the question of the publication of speeches of Senators and Deputies and of the proceedings of parliamentary meetings. As I have already declared at the Chamber of Deputies, the Government have no intention of prohibiting the publication of such matter in the press. The Government are, however, entitled to prohibit the publication of speeches made in Parliament unless they are copied from the official minutes or from accounts drawn up by the official parliamentary reporters; these alone are authentic and dependable. As far as I know, the speeches of the Deputies are being published in the press to-day.

In regard to the different interpretations being made by legal men of the word "neutrality" and the significance of the word, we may let legal men continue disputing among themselves on the subject. *What we know, however, is that, having regard to the terms of the treaty, we are non-belligerent Allies.*

His Excellency Senator Al Shabibi has asked for a definition of the "National Mission" and what it stands for. As far as I and the Iraqi Government know, the "National Mission" means endeavour by diplomatic means for Arabs to obtain their rights in accordance with promises and pledges and the Covenant of the League of Nations.

NOTE.—The remainder of the Prime Minister's statement in reply is devoted to the questions of (a) strengthening the hand of Parliament, and (b) the fair distribution of justice, and his words on both subjects emphasise the desire and intention of the Cabinet to do all that is possible towards strengthening the hand of Parliament and ensuring the fair distribution of justice.

Abdul Muhsin Shilash.

After referring to the preceding speeches, particularly those of Jamil-al-Madfai, Nuri-al-Said, Ridha-al-Shabibi and Naji-al-Suwaidi, Abdul Muhsin Shilash proceeded as follows:—

I believe that his Excellency the former Prime Minister, Saiyid Nuri-al-Said, should have spoken in more explicit and plain terms. His Excellency the Prime Minister declared that the "statement" dealt with two matters, and that, apart from it, there had been certain verbal talks. *Such written communication and such verbal talks are no matter for surprise, for we are bound up with Britain by a treaty which has been upheld by successive Governments, in their programmes of policy, including even the former and the present Governments. What we really seek to ascertain is whether the differences which cropped up had arisen from the process of implementing the provisions of the treaty or from some other cause.* According to the statements made by the former Prime Minister, there is no difference between the Iraqi Government and our ally. I have no desire to dwell at length on this question, and I would content myself with the statement made by his Excellency the present Prime Minister. Nevertheless, I feel

impelled as a matter of duty to point out that it was the crisis that compelled the Supreme Authority to leave the capital. *This is a grave matter which we must reflect upon, but over which secrecy has been maintained.*

Gentlemen, the Iraqi Constitution is no longer respected. This indictment is impliedly confirmed by the statements of his Excellency the Prime Minister. If that was not the case, the Prime Minister had no cause to lay emphasis in his Cabinet programme on the intention of upholding the Constitution.

I beg leave, Gentlemen, to declare that the Supreme Authority must remain respected and honoured under all circumstances, to act as final authority for the solution of grave problems. Had there been no good cause dictated by the needs of the country, the Constitution would not have provided for the sort of prerogatives vested in the Supreme Authority in order to have recourse to the latter in critical times.

I uphold his Excellency Al Shabibi in his remark about the term "national mission" occurring in the Cabinet's programme of policy. I realise, as all of us do, that this and like terms are used by sincere men with, no doubt, good intention. Nevertheless, their use is likely on certain occasions to promote propaganda of a nature harmful to our country with the possibility of making it impossible for Iraq thoroughly to fulfil the national mission in its true sense.

Clause 4 in the Cabinet's programme of policy speaks of the fair distribution of justice and of promoting a sense of duty and faithfulness to one's work among all members of the people. This is very good in principle; but I beg leave of his Excellency the Prime Minister to point out that the people have come to be in greater need of practical results than of fine words recorded on paper. *With her admission into the League of Nations, Iraq became an independent State for the purpose of the administration of her domestic affairs. We all know that since then the British have been letting us alone and have not interfered in our affairs. I believe that for such distressful events as we have gone through and for the lack of respect for our laws, as well as for acts of maladministration leading to instability of conditions—for all these responsibility rests upon us, we having failed in our duties."*

Mustafa-al-Umari.

After summarising the speeches which preceded his and expressing himself in agreement with the speakers on many points in their speeches, particularly the desirability of keeping the army out of politics and upholding the authority of Parliament, Mustafa-al-Umari remarked that these desiderata had been repeated and emphatically expressed in the past, but little had been actually done to realise them.

Abdul Mahdi, Minister of Economics.

Saiyid Abdul Mahdi spoke very shortly emphasising the need for stability, which, he said, was felt by all, and expressing the hope that common efforts will be directed towards securing stable conditions in the country.

Taufiq-al-Suwaidi, Foreign Minister.

His Excellency the Prime Minister has spoken at such length on the points raised by honourable Senators that I feel I need not take up except a few simple points. To begin with, it is not the practice in parliamentary countries for public assemblies to discuss at length and great detail matters of foreign policy. There are special committees to discuss details of questions of foreign affairs before such questions are laid before the whole House.

Gentlemen, that the public should say or hear that Mr. So-and-so has spoken on foreign matters is of no consequence. What actually matters is to get solved delicate problems of foreign relations, proceeding about the job wisely and rationally. What matters still more is maintaining secrecy about such matters. I believe that the House shares with me the opinion that such matters should not be discussed in open assemblies, the main object in discussing them being only to serve the interests of the country.

I may now take up another question on which several Senators have spoken, including his Excellency Senator Shilash, who agrees with others that this country has been exercising its rights, in both domestic and foreign fields, in the manner we had sought, without foreign interference; while in regard to the conduct of our ally, it has been entirely in accord with her undertakings and with the provisions of the Treaty of Alliance. . . .

The remark has been made that the non-severance of relations with Italy has gratified public opinion. Well, Gentlemen, in matters of foreign relations among States it is not gratification of public opinion alone that should be sought, nor are questions of foreign affairs and of consolidation of relations among States dealt with on the basis of ensuring gratification of public opinion. Such questions are dealt with on other bases, such as international standing, international undertakings, neighbourly relations and treaties. I do not believe it to be in the interest of either the people or the State that the whole nation should be acquainted with such matters of detail. One of France's greatest men, Talleyrand, said: "Man is given a tongue not to reveal his conscience but to suppress it"; while Plato says: "We must not tell the people all that we know."

Jalal Baban.

Speaking again, now in reply to Nuri-al-Said, who, he said, might have taken exception to his remark that the fourth Saidi Cabinet had been formed on the same lines as the last four or five Cabinets in Iraq, during whose administrations Iraq was the scene of a series of painful events, Jalal Baban said:—

"Gentlemen, the record of the last few years has indeed been a painful one. From the Cabinet of Al Aiyubi down to that of Al Madfai and the late Yasin-al-Hashimi and succeeding ones, we have gone through a succession of events full of pain such as we cannot at all conceal. I have no desire now to dwell at length on those events. I would only call upon those in places of responsibility, in the name of the public interest and the State, not to deny these events.

"As regards my remark addressed to his Excellency Al Hashimi concerning his speech at the Council of Ministers, I am aware that no speeches were delivered on that occasion. I referred to his few words on the occasion by the term 'speech' only by way of denoting my great appreciation of his words, which had such a high purpose and object in view."

Muhammad Ridha-al-Shabibi.

In this second speech of his, Al Shabibi, taking up the Prime Minister's reply to his request for a definition of the term "national mission," and to his further request for freedom for the press to publish the proceedings of Parliament, said:—

"The definition given by his Excellency the Prime Minister is quite reasonable, and is as should be. I would, however, add that the objects of the national mission should include the strengthening of cultural and economic relations between Iraq and other Arab countries, and the rendering of such aid as may be possible to render to the sons of Arab countries. On this we are all agreed. The fact, however, remains that many people have misunderstood the real purpose of the national mission, and have been acting wrongly under this misunderstanding. This has been the case for a long time, and a grave responsibility rests upon the Government in this connexion. That responsibility consists of stating the fact about the nature of the national mission, indicating what part of that mission is possible of discharge by the people and Government of Iraq acting together, and what part is impossible of being carried through. . . .

"As regards the question of the freedom of opinion and freedom of the press, the press was actually prohibited from the publication of matter the publication of which is authorised under the Constitution. Contrary to what was suggested by the Prime Minister in his statement in reply, the question must not be left to the intention of the Government, as the Constitution is explicit on this right of the people which must not be made the subject of individual interpretation. . . . I would therefore request his Excellency the Prime Minister to reconsider the matter and to ensure for the nation its rights as laid down in the Constitution."

Mahmud Subhi-al-Daftari.

There is nothing noteworthy in this Senator's speech, apart from his concurrence in the view that details of foreign policy should not be publicly discussed in open house in Parliament, and his statement that he approves of the Cabinet's programme of policy, which approval he, however, qualifies with the remark that: "It is not programmes that actually matter but the actual execution thereof."

Daud-al-Chalabi.

Daud-al-Chalabi dealt only with two of the many questions raised in the course of the meeting, namely, (a) the question of upholding the authority of Parliament, and (b) propaganda.

In regard to (a), he suggests certain amendments to the Electoral Law designed to ensure that half the total number of Deputies shall be elected on the nomination of the people themselves, and advocates freedom of formation of political parties.

In regard to the other question, he said:—

"In regard to propaganda, as already remarked by his Excellency the Prime Minister, propaganda is undertaken by all States in the countries of others and cannot be at all suppressed. In admitting this fact I further admit that, according to what we hear and see, propaganda exists of a nature at variance with the Government's desire to proceed in accordance with the Treaty. If those concerned wish to render such propaganda ineffective, they must search out the cause why so many people are affected by such propaganda contrary to the wishes of the Government."

[E 1477/146/93]

No. 12.

Sir M. Lampson to Mr. Winston Churchill.—(Received April 15.)

(No. 235.)

HIS Majesty's Ambassador presents his compliments to His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and has the honour to transmit herewith a copy of a record of conversation between the Secretary of State and the Iraqi Minister for Foreign Affairs on the 7th March, 1941, and a memorandum by Mr. Holman, dated the 8th March, 1941.

Cairo, March 17, 1941.

Enclosure 1 in No. 12.

Record of Conversation between the Secretary of State and the Iraqi Minister for Foreign Affairs on March 7, 1941.

AFTER lunch to-day at the Embassy I had an hour's conversation with the Iraqi Minister for Foreign Affairs on the general situation and in particular on Anglo-Iraqi relations.

General Situation.

1. I explained to the Minister for Foreign Affairs that I had come out here with General Sir John Dill to review the situation in the light of British successes in Africa. He would realise that victories in Libya had transformed the military situation in the Middle East. The spring and summer would be hard, as Germany had to secure a decision somehow before British, Dominion and American industries reached the peak of their production next year, and it was only by breaking Great Britain that Germany could hope to win. We had secured air supremacy over Great Britain and the Channel and unless Germany could obtain air day supremacy, she could not beat us. As it was she was distributing her air forces over Tripoli, Sicily and elsewhere so that the chances of her reaching her objective must have considerably diminished.

Turkey and Greece.

2. I told the Minister for Foreign Affairs that I had just paid a visit to Turkey and Greece to get first-hand information of the position for the purposes of close collaboration, particularly in view of the German menace in the Balkans. I said that Turkey would certainly fight if she were attacked and that I was deeply impressed by the spirit of friendship for Great Britain throughout the country. Greece too was fighting bravely and was proud of her achievements. Great Britain would send both Turkey and Greece all assistance in her power if either of them were attacked by Germany. There were already a large number of British aircraft on the Greek front, but it was not the policy of His Majesty's Government to give a pretext of provocation to Germany. If ever Germany took

the initiative His Majesty's Government must have everything in readiness to counter such a move. In reply to a question by the Minister for Foreign Affairs I said that it was for the Turkish Government to say for certain whether Turkey would immediately come to the help of Greece, if the latter were attacked by Germany. She probably would, but that was a military and political consideration which would naturally depend for its application on the opportune moment. I was convinced, however, that the spirit of Turkey was completely on the side of Greece. I told his Excellency that reports that I was arranging with the de Gaullists, or had done a deal with Turkey at the expense of Syria, to invade Syria were on a line with the usual German propaganda. I added that, if Turkey were attacked by Germany, Turkey would have many military advantages to balance the striking power of the German war machine.

3. I concluded by assuring the Minister for Foreign Affairs that Iraq was never mentioned in my talks in Turkey, so that rumours of the conclusion of a secret agreement between Turkey and Great Britain at the expense of Iraq were without any foundation.

Anglo-Iraqi Relations.

4. I emphasised that Anglo-Iraqi relations were far from satisfactory to-day. Iraq was an ally and yet the Italian Legation still existed in Bagdad. The Iraqi Government were not carrying out their obligations under article 4 of the treaty in the letter and spirit and were not behaving like loyal allies such as Greece, Turkey and Egypt. It was quite impossible for me to ask His Majesty's Government to provide dollars and other Iraqi requirements so long as the Iraqi Government harboured this Italian centre of intrigue. Iraqi relations could never be put on a proper basis so long as His Majesty's Government were not given satisfaction on this point. In fact His Majesty's Government might even find themselves, in view of war-time conditions, obliged to cut down what they were already doing for Iraq and concentrate on 100 per cent. allies.

5. His Excellency replied that he himself was convinced of the wisdom of close co-operation with Great Britain, but that the rupture of diplomatic relations with Italy was a most delicate question and needed careful preparation. He explained that since the rupture of relations with Germany the Iraqi army had been constantly kept short of war equipment, &c., by Great Britain; this had created a deplorable effect on the army. It had therefore become more difficult now in view of army feeling to break with Italy at our request. If he could only be given time he would try and win over the army to his point of view. Failing that he would try to eliminate the army leaders. If he did not succeed, he himself would resign. What help could Great Britain give if the army opposed by force the action of the Government? I replied that this was quite a new aspect which would require consideration. It was the duty of Iraqi Government to govern in its own territories and to fulfil its treaty obligations.

6. I expressed my thanks to his Excellency for his personal intervention in securing the appointment of Mr. Smith as Director-General of Railways. His Excellency seemed very flattered and said that he had met Mr. Smith that morning and liked him. At my request he promised to let the Embassy have an official acceptance of the nomination on his return to Bagdad.

7. The Minister for Foreign Affairs stated that he had suggested recently a plan for the return of Palestinian refugees to Palestine, but had so far received no answer. I replied that the matter was under examination by the competent authorities (see Bagdad telegrams Nos. 132 and 177). His Excellency enquired whether His Majesty's Government could not implement immediately the undertaking in the White Paper of Palestine regarding the establishment of a Constitution. I told him that naturally His Majesty's Government stood by the White Paper but that I could not go beyond that.

8. His Excellency then raised the question of direct railway communication between Turkey and Iraq. He was agreeable in principle but would need material and a loan to carry through the project (see Bagdad telegrams No. 8 to Secretary of State at Athens and No. 192 to Foreign Office). He estimated the cost at £6 million. Why could we not use the line through Syria or lorry traffic by road? In reply to his request I told the Minister for Foreign Affairs that concrete proposals for the scheme would be submitted to him.

9. In conclusion the Minister for Foreign Affairs asked why no satisfaction had been given to the Iraqi Government in connexion with their proposals of 1938 for the application of the Iraqi Customs to Koweit and the construction of a railway line from Basra to Khor Abdullah. I promised to look into these questions.

10. After the Minister for Foreign Affairs' departure I instructed Mr. Holman to make it clear to his Excellency that I regard about a fortnight as a proper period in which the Minister for Foreign Affairs might prepare the ground for the rupture of relations with Italy. This would enable me to put off considering the proposals contained in Bagdad telegram No. 191 until my return to London in the event of no satisfaction being forthcoming.

Enclosure 2 in No. 12.

Memorandum by Mr. Holman.

THE Iraqi Minister for Foreign Affairs asked me to call on him this morning when he went over all the points in your conversation of yesterday. He seemed very pleased at the cordiality of the interview.

2. The main question discussed was of course the rupture of diplomatic relations with Italy. I therefore took the opportunity of telling him that you hoped that in about a fortnight we should see his efforts crowned with success. He replied that he would do everything he could. He then expressed the view that his task with colleagues would be made easier if he could have some personal assurance that in the event of the dismissal of the Italian Legation—

- (1) His Majesty's Government would be accommodating as regards dollars and equipment;
- (2) His Majesty's Government would implement their undertaking in the White Paper to proceed to the establishment of a Constitution in Palestine; and
- (3) That His Majesty's Government would now or later sponsor "Syria for the Syrians."

3. I told him that there could be no question of *marchandage*, but personally I felt that as regards (1) His Majesty's Government would do what they could. Everything depended on the amount of dollars and equipment available. As regards (2) I referred him to your statement yesterday that His Majesty's Government stood by the White Paper, but that it was difficult to go too fast in war time. The Minister for Foreign Affairs appeared satisfied. As regards (3) the Minister for Foreign Affairs said that the Iraqi Government would be only too pleased for Great Britain to occupy Syria. What they wished to avoid was that the future of Syria should be decided by de-Gaullists, Vichy-ites and Turks. If the British held the country, they could give it its independence after the war in consultation with the Iraqi Government. I pointed out to his Excellency all the difficulties of making any official declaration about the future of Syria at this moment, and that it was difficult for us to tie our hands as regards the future. His Excellency will mention these points to you at the Embassy reception this afternoon if you can spare him five minutes. He proposed to leave for Bagdad by British Airways on Wednesday next.

4. I am returning at dawn to-morrow.

L. H. HOLMAN.

March 8, 1941.

[E 1717/1/93]

No. 13.

Sir B. Newton to Mr. Eden.—(Received April 26.)

(No. 114.)

Sir,

Bagdad, March 26, 1941.

THE chief political event which has occurred since I wrote my despatch No. 89 of the 1st March was the meeting of the Minister for Foreign Affairs with yourself in Cairo at the end of the first week in March.

Taufiq Suwaidi returned to Bagdad on the 17th March. He spoke to me and to others of his difficulties and regretted that His Majesty's Government had not found a means to help him to overcome them by promising munitions for the army. He was, however, prepared to tackle, albeit with some uneasiness, the task set him of severing diplomatic relations with Italy.

2. He was not precise in his talk about his difficulties, but it is safe to put them down as being the determined opposition of Rashid Ali, the Mufti and the military clique, and the half-heartedness or worse of General Taha. Of these elements the Mufti holds the central position, and quite apart from the strength

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which he gains from his alliance with the other two, the Mufti's personal influence with General Taha, and even with Taufiq Suwaidi, makes it difficult for either to affront him by doing anything so contrary to his wishes as to break off relations with Italy. There have been some signs, however, that the Mufti, or at any rate his Palestinian associates, are not as popular as they were, and in responsible quarters as far apart as Sulaimaniya and Bagdad I have heard criticism of their continued presence and of the cost involved to Iraq.

3. The Cabinet are, however, confronted with other perplexing problems. The military clique is still defiant, the vacancies in the Cabinet are not yet filled, and under the guidance of the Mufti and his associates tiresome agitations are developing in favour of interference in Syria's troubles and the release of the men sentenced by court-martial in Bagdad and Mosul in 1939, including Hikmat Sulaiman and the men condemned for the murder of Mr. Monck Mason.

4. The press has also tried to make a major question of the recent disturbances in Syria, and has been painting a picture of a formidable outbreak of national indignation with French misrule. Shukri Kawatli's manifesto has been reproduced, and articles advocating that Iraq should support Syria in her struggle for freedom have appeared in most of the daily newspapers. When I saw the Minister for Foreign Affairs last week he did not, however, seem to have much sympathy with or knowledge of this agitation.

5. The story broadcast from Bari to the effect that the Syrian disturbances were the result of British intrigues was not taken up in the press here, though it still has wide currency among the people and has done much to confuse their ideas. It is hard for them to know what they should rightly think when, on the one hand, they are urged to believe that the Syrians are making a gallant bid for freedom and, on the other, they are assured that the whole movement has been arranged by the British for their own evil purposes.

6. In Parliament little of importance has occurred since the beginning of March. A Royal irada prolonged the current session until the end of the month, but the adjournment is likely to come without any further effort being made by either House to press home the criticisms and proposals put forward in the debates on the Government's programme.

7. A new and successful feature of German wireless propaganda in Arabic which is having noticeable success in Bagdad is criticism of British democracy as bogus coupled with specious claims that national socialism levels the rich with the poor and ensures well-paid work for all. This theme appeals to a mass of men and women little interested in either Germany's might or Hitler's sympathy for Arab nationalism, and talk of the blessings that nazism would bring to the poor at the expense of the rich is now common in the Bagdad coffee-shops frequented by working men. As, however, it is the richer and not the poorer members of the community who have the chief influence, such propaganda may easily overreach itself.

8. The great Arabian pilgrimage fell this year on the 19th March. A vast concourse of thousands of Shias gathered in Kerbala, and it is to the credit of the authorities that no disorders or epidemics occurred. From several sources I learn that in poems and speeches and in the meeting-places of the people there was much said of loyalty to the Throne and the Regent, and the leading Ulema ("Divines") seem to have warned the sheikhs and tribesmen quite frankly not to be deceived by anti-British propaganda.

9. I am sending copies of this despatch to His Majesty's representatives at Cairo, Angora, Jedda, Tehran, to His Majesty's High Commissioner for Palestine and Transjordan and to the Government of India.

I have, &c.

BASIL NEWTON.

[E 1812/239/93]

No. 14.

Sir B. Newton to Mr. Eden.—(Received April 30.)

(No. 105 E.)

Sir,

Bagdad, March 15, 1941.

WITH reference to my despatch No. 52 E. of the 3rd February, 1940, I have the honour to transmit herewith three copies of the Administration Report of the Port of Basra and the Fao Bar Dredging Scheme for the year ended the 31st March, 1940.⁽¹⁾

⁽¹⁾ Not printed.

2. In spite of the outbreak of war, the financial position of the port at the end of March 1940 was, on the whole, satisfactory, thanks to a policy of strict economy. The actual earnings, amounting to I.D. 418,059, were I.D. 28,201 less than the budget estimates, which were framed prior to the outbreak of war, and I.D. 26,083 less than the actual revenue for the year 1938-39. On the other hand, the actual expenditure was I.D. 362,234, as against I.D. 365,517 in the preceding year, representing a saving of I.D. 71,316 on the sanctioned budget vote. The realised surplus was I.D. 55,825, as against I.D. 78,625 for the year 1938-39. Of the former amount, I.D. 52,465 was transferred to the Surplus Revenue Account, raising it to I.D. 407,318. Only I.D. 11,550 of the accumulated surplus funds was spent on capital works, as compared with I.D. 147,074 for the year 1938-39. The General Reserve Account remained unchanged at I.D. 225,000, but the investment account increased from I.D. 34,000 to I.D. 84,556. The seventeenth instalment (I.D. 18,029) in respect of Capital Debt Redemption was paid to His Majesty's Government, reducing the amount outstanding to I.D. 234,407.

3. The number and the gross registered tonnage of the ships which entered the port during the years 1938-39 and 1939-40 were as follows:—

	1938-39.		1939-40.	
	Number.	G.R.T.	Number.	G.R.T.
Abadan and Khoramshahr	948	5,819,360	827	5,310,141
Basra	281	1,348,411	250	1,259,686
Total	1,229	7,167,771	1,077	6,569,827

4. The total tonnage of cargo which passed through the port during the year under review was 1,282,621, as compared with 1,299,466 for the preceding year. Of the former figure, 827,945 tons were imports, as compared with 844,464 in the previous year, and 454,676 tons were exports, as against 455,002 in 1938-39. Thus, although the number of ships visiting the port fell off by some 12 per cent. in 1939-40, the cargo traffic was maintained almost at pre-war level, contrary to expectations.

5. As regards the year 1940-41, the shipping difficulties in the Mediterranean owing to Italy's entry into the war and the opening of the through railway route between Iraq and Turkey have diverted to Basra important traffic to and from Turkey and the Middle East. This development has to some extent offset the reduction in shipping visiting Basra arising from the curtailment of British and the elimination of German and Italian shipping services. The results of the year 1940-41 may therefore prove reasonably satisfactory under war conditions.

6. The Fao Bar Dredging Scheme experienced a difficult year, as the abnormally heavy floods, which were the highest on record, caused serious shoaling in all the dredged channels and the Karun Bar. During the year under review 5,379,703 cubic yards of soil were carried away and deposited at sea. Although the four dredgers in operation were unable to recover all the ground lost, the actual net loss for the year, amounting to 103,763 cubic yards, was only about 25 per cent. of the loss during the previous year. The total shortage since 1933 was thus increased to 806,001 cubic yards. With the addition of the fifth dredger, ordered in 1939, it is hoped to keep the channels open to ships of a deeper draught than at present.

7. Abadan shipping contributed I.D. 216,131 to the total revenue of I.D. 241,324 from dredger dues, a decrease of I.D. 13,881 as compared with the previous year. Expenditure amounted to I.D. 213,321. The surplus of I.D. 28,003 was transferred to the Surplus Revenue Account, increasing it to I.D. 430,656. At the beginning of the year 1939-40 a sum of I.D. 136,250 was on fixed deposit with the Iraqi Treasury and the Eastern Bank. This was reduced to I.D. 40,000 at the end of the year as a result of withdrawals to meet the requirements of the scheme. A further decline in receipts is anticipated during the current year.

8. I am sending a copy of this despatch to the Government of India, the Department of Overseas Trade, His Majesty's Consul at Basra, and the Senior Naval Officer, Bahrein.

I have, &c.

BASIL NEWTON.

[E 1806/1/93]

No. 15.

Sir K. Cornwallis to Mr. Eden.—(Received April 30.)

(No. 122.)

Sir,

Bagdad, April 6, 1941.

WITH reference to Sir Basil Newton's despatch No. 87 of the 27th February, I have the honour to transmit to you herewith a copy of a letter from Mr. C. J. Edmonds, the adviser to the Ministry of the Interior, describing the events which led up to the military *coup d'Etat* of the 1st April.

2. I am sending copies of this despatch to His Majesty's representatives at Cairo, Angora, Jedda and Tehran, to His Majesty's High Commissioner for Palestine and Transjordan and to the Government of India.

I have, &c.

KINAHAN CORNWALLIS.

Enclosure in No. 15.

Mr. Edmonds to Sir B. Newton.

My dear Ambassador,

Bagdad, April 1, 1941.

IN my letter of the 15th February, 1941, I carried my appreciation of the effects of the progress of the war on the political situation in Iraq down to 1st February, when Taha-al-Hashimi replaced Rashid Ali as Prime Minister. Nothing very striking has happened since then, but two months is a respectable interval, and an interim note even if a trifle disjointed, on developments, such as they have been, to the end of March may help to keep the length of any future appreciation within reasonable limits.

2. The principal external events affecting the situation in this country may be classified as follows:—

Credit Side.

- (1) Capture of Benghazi (the 7th February).
- (2) Progress in East Africa (February and March).
- (3) Lease and Lend Act (the 15th March).
- (4) Russo-Turkish Declaration (the 24th March).
- (5) The *coup* in Yugoslavia (the 27th March).
- (6) The fleet action in the Ionian Sea (the 29th March).

Debit Side.

- (1) Adhesion of Bulgaria to the Axis (the 1st March).
- (2) Deteriorating situation in Yugoslavia (the 19th-26th March).

There was thus a healthy balance on the credit side to encourage our friends and facilitate a more loyal orientation of official policy, if the Government were so inclined. The outspoken frankness of Colonel Donovan (the 12th February) was also helpful within a limited circle. Against this it must be mentioned that the full significance of the Lease and Lend Act is probably appreciated by a minority, and that the very completeness of the victories in Africa has tended to detract somewhat from their effect—the Italians are classed as, indeed, lambs (Arabic: *talyan*=yearling lambs), fit animals to be raided and carried off with no more opposition than a bleat or two. On the whole, events in Iraq have not been greatly influenced by external factors, except perhaps in a negative sense; they have been rather the natural sequel to what had happened just before.

3. The new Cabinet was constituted as follows:—

Survivals from the last Cabinet—

Prime Minister and Defence: Taha-al-Hashimi.
Interior and Justice: Umar Nadhmi.
Education: Sadiq Bassam.

New Ministers—

Foreign Affairs: Tewfiq Suwaidi.
Finance and Communications: Ali Mumtaz.
Economics: S. Abdul Mahdi.
Social Affairs: Hamdi-al-Pachachi.

4. I do not agree with those who maintain that the new Cabinet, in its composition, is no better than the old. The three wild men, Rashid Ali, Naji Shawkat and Naji Suwaidi, have gone. Of the survivors from the last Cabinet, Umar Nadhmi now ranks third in importance as a Minister and can be counted upon to be friendly, if a trifle cautious and unimaginative; Sadiq Bassam follows Taha unquestioningly and will not influence higher policy one way or the other. Of the new men, Tewfiq Suwaidi is essentially friendly and can influence his colleagues more effectively than Nuri, who is now a lonely figure in Iraqi politics and, for all his goodwill, is liable to be in effect an anti-British irritant rather than a pro-British tonic. Saiyid Abdul Mahdi was the leader of the Shia block of Deputies who first began to show opposition to Rashid Ali in the Majlis. Hamdi-al-Pachachi is, it is true, president of the Palestine Defence Society, but he is one of the politicians of the old school (he last held office in the Cabinet of Abdul Muhsin-al-Sa'dun in 1925-26), most of whom have mellowed from bitter opponents of the mandate into good friends and supporters of the alliance. Ali Mumtaz is an able civil servant, who knows English well and has worked harmoniously with British officials; his influence is not likely to be used in a hostile sense, though in any groupings within the Cabinet he, like Sadiq Bassam, would automatically line up with his uncle-in-law, Taha.

5. But if Taha-al-Hashimi was the key man of the last three Administrations he is naturally more than ever the key man of the Cabinet over which he himself presides. He is, and must be for some time, the slave of his own past; and that is why I devoted so much space to that past in my letter of the 15th February. If there has been no abrupt reversal of policy it is because Taha was himself largely responsible for the policy pursued by Rashid Ali's Cabinet.

6. On the 6th February Taha Pasha made a statement in the Majlis refuting the tendentious and mischievous parts of Rashid Ali's letter of resignation and professing loyalty to the alliance in less ambiguous terms than his predecessor. On the 22nd February he made a second statement, the principal feature of which was the affirmation that the Government intended to strengthen the position of Parliament and submit to its control. The refusal of the Regent to dissolve Parliament on the 30th January, followed by the Prime Minister's declaration, encouraged Deputies to speak more outspokenly than has been their wont for some years; there were lively debates in the Chamber of Deputies daily from the 23rd to 26th February, and in the Senate on the 27th and following days; the tone of the speeches was almost unanimously hostile to Rashid Ali (who did not venture to attend after the first day) and favourable to the Regent and the policy of honest implementation of the alliance. There has been a tendency in some quarters to pooh-pooh these debates as futile academic exercises because the Government was not thereby forced to take any drastic or spectacular action. I do not agree. The speeches have set a fashion of more outspoken declarations in our favour and given a healthy lead to public opinion which had hitherto been conspicuously lacking; it is significant that the rumours current during March of an impending military *coup d'Etat* invariably dated it "after the prorogation of Parliament," an admission that a live Parliament in session may prove a partial corrective to the military domination of politics of the last few years. The Majlis was prorogued on the 31st March.

7. Almost immediately on his return to the Ministry of the Interior Umar Nadhmi caused Captain Majid-al-Hashimi, the Director of Press and Propaganda, to be returned to his military duties; his place has been taken temporarily (but with no other candidate for the succession in the field) by Kemal Abdul Majid, Assistant Director-General in the Ministry of the Interior, a competent civil servant of friendly complexion. The Bagdad broadcasts have improved in tone and certain embassy proposals connected with propaganda have, after long pigeon-holing, been agreed to. The *Istiqlal* and *Bilad* remain unrepentant, but other friendly journals are encountering fewer difficulties than under the previous régime.

8. Soon after the formation of the new Cabinet it became generally known that the Regent was pressing for the dismissal of the officers of the Sinister Quadrumvirate, who had supported Rashid Ali in his attempts to coerce him; an important section of public opinion had been genuinely shocked by what had occurred and expected the punishment of the offenders. On the other hand, Taha Pasha is generally believed to have assured the officers that if he came back into power they would have nothing to fear. There is some reason to believe that Taha at first did think of a compromise solution, the transfer of the officers concerned away from the combatant commands in the capital. But faced with their opposition he deferred action until the 26th March, when orders were finally

issued for an exchange of posts between Kamil Shabib, Commanding the 1st Division at Washshash, and Ibrahim-al-Rawi, Commanding at Diwaniya; Salah-ud-Din was also instructed to remove his headquarters from Bagdad to Qaraghan. During the next three or four days rumours were current that the officers concerned had torn up the orders and that a revolt was imminent. However that may be, the orders were watered down so that Kamil Shabib should go on two or three weeks' leave before handing over to Ibrahim-al-Rawi, who would remain for that period at Diwaniya "owing to the delicate tribal situation there." The departure of Salah-ud-Din was similarly said to have been deferred for a week or two "pending structural alteration to headquarters." In response to my suggestion that they might be wise to prolong the life of the Majlis for a fortnight or so, both Tewfiq Suwaidi and Umar Nadhmi have assured me that they are confident that these arrangements will be carried out.

9. In the meantime Rashid Ali had not gone into discreet retirement as is the way of most retiring Prime Ministers. On the contrary, he became exceedingly active trying to organise a movement against the Regent and ourselves in the coffee-shops of the capital and among the Euphrates tribes, as, indeed, he had threatened to act if driven from office (see my letter of the 3rd January, paragraph 4, end); he was, moreover, at pains to maintain contact with members of the Cabinet in the hope of continuing to influence policy; at first Taha seemed more anxious to conciliate Rashid than *vice versa*; Rashid Ali openly complained to his friends that it was Taha who had pushed him into the morass and abandoned him there. Towards the end of the month Rashid Ali, Naji Shawkat and three of his four blackleg Ministers (the exception being Musa Shahbandar) submitted to the Ministry of the Interior an application for permission to form a political party; the Ministry intends to refuse permission.

10. From the point of view of the general public, the principal fact of the internal political situation is a continuing struggle between the Regent on the one side and Rashid on the other. Rashid Ali, whose policy is now openly pro-Axis, is supported by the Mufti, the four officers, Naji Shawkat, Naji Suwaidi, the three blacklegs among the politicians, a student element and a few Euphrates tribesmen led by Abdul Wahid of the Fatla; he had made good use of secret service funds while in power, and, since, is reputed to be distributing Italian money; he is himself a rich man owing to his control of the Qadiri Waqf. The Regent is considered friendly to us, and has the support of the parties of Jamil Madfai and Nuri (which have nothing else in common), the majority of the two Chambers, the Mujtahids of the Holy Places, most of the Shia tribal leaders of the Tigris and Euphrates and, in so far as these unvocal people count at all, the Kurds.

11. An interesting feature of recent developments is the growing hostility to the Mufti (and of course his horde of Palestinian parasites), not only among the Shias and the Kurds, but among Arab Sunnis; he is frequently abused with the most opprobrious epithets as an outsider who destroyed his own Palestine, and now wants to destroy Iraq. By now he probably realises that he has overplayed his hand and has made a mistake in getting himself identified with one faction, and that an unpopular one.

12. Between the two factions stands Taha, weak and irresolute, ashamed to adopt a policy uncongenial to the Mufti, afraid of the military monster he himself created, and stopped by his own past from changing direction too abruptly and taking the road which he may have recognised in his heart as the right one. He is always reputed to have said of himself that he lacked the knowledge and experience to become Prime Minister, and nothing that has happened so far suggests that he underestimated his own capacity.

Postscript: April 2, 1941.

13. My draft had reached this point when I stopped to dress for dinner on the evening of the 1st April. On the way home, about a quarter past eleven, I saw two militaries and a car outside the main telephone office and soldiers on guard by the gate. I guessed that the long-talked-of *coup* must have, in fact, occurred, as so often predicted "after the prorogation of the Majlis and before the arrival of the new ambassador."

Yours sincerely,

C. J. EDMONDS.

[E 2389/1/93]

No. 16.

Mr. Eden to Mr. Stonehewer-Bird (Jedda).

(No. 21.)

Sir,

Foreign Office, May 19, 1941.

THE Saudi Arabian Minister came to see me this afternoon, when we had some discussion on recent developments in the Middle Eastern situation. I told Sheikh Hafiz Wahba that I was very grateful for the manner in which Ibn Saud had dealt with Naji Suwaidi on his recent visit to Riyadh and was gratified by the terms of His Majesty's message to the Iraqi people.

2. I realised that at one time Ibn Saud was not inclined to share the very unfavourable view we have been compelled to take of Rashid Ali. Our view had, however, been based on very reliable evidence. We had known for long past that Rashid Ali was hand in glove with the Axis. In the circumstances, there could be no question now of any compromise settlement with him. The Saudi Arabian Minister at once assented to this.

3. I continued that His Majesty's Government had, however, no quarrel with Iraq—that we were only anxious to re-establish as quickly as possible a basis for mutual trust and co-operation. Our military preparations were developing according to plan, and I hoped it would soon be possible to set up a friendly Government in Bagdad. If we had been prepared to adopt against Bagdad the type of terror tactics employed by the Germans against towns such as Warsaw and Belgrade we might perhaps have succeeded more quickly. But in view of the many sacred buildings in Bagdad we had not felt able to do this. The Saudi Arabian Minister rejoined that he was sure that we were right in the course which we had taken. There were, however, certain suggestions he would wish to make. It was important that we should send as soon as possible a representative of an alternative Iraqi Government opposed to Rashid Ali to Basra. Any well-known Bagdadi would meet the situation. He suggested Jamil Madfai. I replied that Jamil Madfai was now on his way to Habbaniyah with a column of British troops. In that event, the Minister reiterated that some other representative Iraqi should be chosen. If he arrived at Basra it would at once steady the situation. The Minister also considered that we should maintain our propaganda and emphasise that our object was not to occupy or to conquer Iraq but to deal with hostile elements in league with the Axis.

4. We passed to a discussion of the situation in Syria. The Minister said that he thought that General de Gaulle and, above all, General Catroux would be able to effect much in that country. The latter was very popular in Syria. He thought it preferable that French troops should go into Syria rather than our own and hoped that we might find it possible to do this soon.

5. In conclusion, the Minister made it plain that Ibn Saud had taken his stand in friendship with us. He would not change, but he hoped that we would do all in our power to bring about a speedy solution of the situation in Iraq which was at present serious.

I am, &c.

ANTHONY EDEN.

[E 3286/1/93]

No. 17.

Sir K. Cornwallis to Mr. Eden.—(Received June 24.)

(No. 143.)

Sir,

Bagdad, April 28, 1941.

IN his despatch No. 114 of the 26th March, Sir Basil Newton reviewed events in Iraq up to the time of the return of Taufiq Suwaidi (then Minister for Foreign Affairs) from his visit to Cairo. In this despatch I shall record briefly the subsequent events which concluded with the arrival of British troops at Basra.

2. So soon as he came back to Bagdad Taufiq Suwaidi began to go into the question of breaking off relations with Italy. He quickly found that the senior military commanders were resolutely opposed to such a step and realised that in order to have freedom of action the Cabinet must remove these officers from the dominant position which they had secured in the political life of the country. He therefore took up this matter with the Prime Minister and his colleagues as a necessary preliminary to dealing with the Italian Legation. At the same time the Regent continued to be insistent that the Prime Minister should take disciplinary action against the same officers for their misbehaviour during the crisis which had taken place at the end of January.

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3. After much hesitation Taha Pasha was induced to act. Towards the end of March he issued an order as Minister of Defence transferring Lieutenant-Colonel Kamil Shabib, Officer Commanding 1st Division with headquarters in Bagdad, to command the 4th Division stationed at Diwaniyah. Kamil Shabib refused to obey and supported by his three associates, Lieutenant-Colonel Salah-din Sabbagh, Officer Commanding 3rd Division, Lieutenant-Colonel Fahmi Said, Officer Commanding Mechanised Force, and Lieutenant-Colonel Mahmud Salman, Officer Commanding Iraqi Air Force, he called on Taha Pasha and declared the order to be illegal. Taha Pasha was quite unable to deal effectively with this insubordination. He gave up the attempt to assert the authority of the Cabinet and to appease the Regent offered his Highness the suggestion that he should receive the four officers, accept an apology from them and thereafter regard the affair of their earlier misconduct as closed. The Amir would not at first agree to this proposal, but finding no support or encouragement from the politicians of any party or group for his desire to deal firmly with military presumption he yielded afterwards to the Prime Minister's importunities and on the 1st April signified his willingness to receive the officers at the Palace.

4. His decision came too late. A few hours afterwards, between 10 o'clock and midnight, troops occupied the Bagdad telegraph office, the telephone exchange and the broadcasting station and picketed all the approaches to the city. The four officers then extorted a letter of resignation from Taha Pasha and went to find the Regent to demand that he should accept Taha Pasha's resignation and appoint Rashid Ali in his place. The Regent, being warned, eluded them, and after hiding in a relative's house throughout the night took refuge early the next morning in the American Legation.

5. The Regent's flight placed the officers in a dilemma, for without an Iradah from his Highness neither Taha Pasha's resignation nor Rashid Ali's appointment could be made constitutionally complete. From the empty Palace they returned to Taha Pasha's house where the members of the Cabinet had by then been gathered together. The meeting seems to have gone on all through the night while the Cabinet made a vain attempt to find a compromise. In the morning they dispersed with nothing settled and twenty-four hours of uncertainty followed, during which Taufiq Suwaidi made a last despairing effort to persuade Taha Pasha to hold the Government together and defy the officers. But Taha Pasha had no courage for such a task, and by the evening it was known that he had thrown in his hand. The following day (3rd April) his resignation was published in the press and Rashid Ali took over control of the Government offices in the name of the Government of National Defence.

6. The Regent, in the meantime, was spirited away from the American Legation to Habbaniya, where I found him on the afternoon of the 2nd April on my arrival by air from Cairo. I had only time for a brief conversation before I proceeded to Bagdad, but I did what I could to encourage him. The next afternoon he and Ali Jaudat Beg were flown to Basra. He was joined two days later by Jamil Madfai.

7. The first act of the Government of National Defence was to issue two proclamations. The first appeared over the signature of the Chief of the General Staff, Amin Zaki. It accused the Regent of treason, violation of the rights of the nation and desertion of his post in time of crisis. It then went on to declare that the army had provisionally entrusted full executive authority to Rashid Ali-al-Gailani as head of a Government of National Defence. The second proclamation was signed by Rashid Ali. He declared that he had accepted the burden of the position of head of the National Government as a patriotic duty, and added that the programme of the Government would be to carry on Iraq's national mission, to honour Iraq's international obligations, especially the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty, and to keep Iraq out of the war.

8. In Basra the garrison was at first friendly to the Amir Abdul Illah, but later, on receipt of orders from Bagdad, the officer commanding attempted on the 4th April to arrest his Highness and his companions. They fortunately escaped and took refuge on board one of His Majesty's ships in the Shatt-al-Arab. The officer commanding then arrested the mutessarif, who had been loyally helping his Highness, and sent him in custody to Bagdad. These events destroyed the Regent's hope of establishing a strong centre of loyalty at Basra from which he could defy the junta in Bagdad, and apart from giving him asylum there remained little that His Majesty's Government could do to help his cause.

9. In Bagdad Rashid Ali pushed forward rapidly measures to regularise his Administration. He formed a High Defence Council consisting of the Chief of the General Staff, the officers commanding the four divisions of the Iraqi army,

the officer commanding the mechanised force and the officer commanding the Iraqi air force. The civil members were himself, Yunis Sabawi and Ali Mahmud (the last two had been his supporters in the crisis which led to his fall in January). He also got into touch with the embassy through the adviser to the Ministry of the Interior. Through this channel he conveyed profuse assurances of his desire to carry out loyally the treaty of alliance, and indicated that in order to obtain the full recognition of His Majesty's Government he was willing to put through the following plan: the Regent to accept Taha Pasha's resignation and to entrust Rashid Ali with the task of forming a new Cabinet. The new Cabinet then to sanction the Regent's absence from the country for four months and the Sharif Sharaf to act as Regent while the Amir Abdul Illah was away. He undertook concurrently personally to broadcast to counter German propaganda, to implement the alliance on a wider basis than before, to stop all agitation about Palestine and Syria, to give control of publicity to the adviser to the Ministry of the Interior and to prepare public opinion for a rupture with Italy. His military associates would not, however, give time for a reply to be received to these proposals, and under their pressure he summoned an extraordinary meeting of Parliament on the 10th April. A joint session of the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies then gave a unanimous vote in favour of setting aside the Amir Abdul Illah and electing the Sharif Sharaf Regent in his place. Forceful methods were used to persuade Senators and Deputies to attend and to vote in the desired manner. Some absented themselves, but 94 out of a total of 135 were present.

10. In a speech made after the election of the new Regent Rashid Ali said:—

“This national movement is entirely an internal movement having no connexion whatever with any foreign State. Our relations with foreign States are based on the honouring of our international obligations in accordance with our custom. I declare also that we shall honour the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty. We shall carry out and maintain this alliance and Iraq will continue zealously to fulfil this treaty, both in the letter and the spirit.”

11. Immediately after his election the new Regent went to the Palace where his first official act was to accept the resignation of Taha-al-Hashimi, and his second to entrust the formation of a new Cabinet to Rashid Ali. Rashid Ali completed this task two days later and on the 12th April the new Regent signed Iradahs making the following appointments:—

Prime Minister and Acting Minister of the Interior: Rashid Ali.

Foreign Affairs: Musa Shabandar.

Defence: Naji Shawkat.

Finance: Naji Suwaidi.

Justice: Ali Mahmud.

Social Affairs: Rauf Bahrani.

Economics: Yunis Sabawi.

Education: Hassan Salman.

Communications and Works: Muhammad Ali Mahmud.

Behind the Cabinet the High Defence Council remained in being and placed the military commanders in a position from which they could virtually veto any Cabinet proposal which they disliked.

12. On the 13th April I received your decision that sea- and air-borne troops would be sent urgently to Basra to open up a line of communication through Iraq to Palestine. I thereupon arranged with the air officer commanding and the senior naval officer in the Persian Gulf for the Amir Abdul Illah and his party to be taken from Basra to safety in Jerusalem. They arrived at their destination on the 16th April. Meanwhile I made private and unofficial contact with Rashid Ali in the hope of leading him into a proper mood to accept the arrival of British troops without opposition. Information of their coming seems to have reached the Iraqi Government from several different sources two or three days before the troops were due, and the Ministry of Defence sent reinforcements to Basra with orders to resist any unauthorised landing. I therefore decided to give formal notification of the approach of the convoy some hours earlier than I had originally intended, in order to allay misgivings and to forestall direct enquiry.

13. I met Rashid Ali for the third time on the evening of the 16th April. I explained that the troops were coming to open the lines of communication, and that if the new Government gave unconditional co-operation in accordance with the provisions of the treaty His Majesty's Government, for their part, would be prepared to enter at once into formal relations. I also expressed the hope that

further co-operation on the part of the Iraqi authorities would enable formal relations to be established before long. Rashid Ali received this news well, and agreed to give all facilities for the movement of troops under the plans drawn up last summer.

14. The air-borne troops began to arrive on the afternoon of the 17th April, and the movement continued for several days. The convoy of sea-borne troops arrived at Basra on 18th April, and the disembarkation was carried out without untoward incident. The available evidence indicates that though the Government did their best to put a good face on the matter they were much put out by the arrival of the British force. The military commanders seem to have objected strongly, and the Prime Minister only appeased them by lavish assurances that the force was small and that it would pass rapidly through the country to Palestine. Messages urging that the troops should pass on quickly in small detachments were sent to me by the Prime Minister through the adviser to the Ministry of the Interior and the head of the Military Mission, and the day after the convoy arrived the Ministry for Foreign Affairs addressed a note to the embassy informing me that the Iraqi Government agreed to the disembarkation of the troops on the following conditions:—

- (a) All measures should be taken to hasten their immediate onward movement.
- (b) Reasonable notice should be given of the arrival of further forces, and the total strength of the British forces in Iraq at any one time should not exceed one mixed brigade.
- (c) No further troops should disembark before those which had arrived had passed out of the country.

15. These conditions reflected the Iraqi army commanders' suspicion of the purpose for which the troops had come, and it is evident that if the Iraqi Government try to insist on the observance of such conditions acute tension will soon develop between themselves and His Majesty's Government.

16. Public feeling about the arrival of the troops has been varied. Under forceful persuasion from the local authorities deputations from all parts of the provinces have been flocking into Bagdad to offer fulsome congratulations to the new Prime Minister, but their private sentiments are different. In most liwas, except Diwaniya and Kerbala, the tribal attitude is generally one of indifference. The tribes feel that their personal and tribal interests are not involved, and they regard the latest change as being much the same as the other changes of Government which have been brought about almost annually since the mandate came to an end. Some of the older men of the official and educated classes are a little shocked by the way in which the Constitution has been disregarded and the law set aside, but others are disposed to see in it an opportunity for promotion. Most of the younger educated men were at first enthusiastic supporters of Rashid Ali's new régime, which they believed would bring the final delivery of Iraq from the trammels of British control, but when British troops arrived Rashid Ali lost much of his popularity. It seemed to many that he had deceived them and that, while posing as the champion of fuller national liberties, he had secretly come to terms with the British. They even accused him openly of having been bribed by His Majesty's Government. In the Diwaniyah and Kerbala liwas tribal opinion is sharply divided. Rashid Ali has secured the support of some of the leading sheikhs by flattery and promises, but there are many others who are against him, and it is in the Diwaniyah liwa that trouble for the Government is most likely to begin. The Shiah Divines of the Holy Cities have so far refused to declare in favour of the new régime.

17. The attitude of foreign Governments towards the new régime has varied with their relations with His Majesty's Government. The American, Turkish and Egyptian Governments instructed their representatives to act in harmony with the British Embassy. King Ibn Saud recognised the new arrangements, but sent advice to Rashid Ali to take care of his relations with His Majesty's Government. The Italian and Japanese Governments were, of course, quick to offer generous congratulations, but the representative of the Vichy Government, though not keeping in such close touch with the embassy as his American, Turkish and Egyptian colleagues, was instructed not to enter into relations with the new Government before I had received your instructions to do so myself.

18. The army commanders' prompt seizure of the administrative machine and their effective secret police work prevented any of the Iraqi politicians outside Rashid Ali's group from opposing his plans. As I have related above, Jamil Madfai and Ali Jaudat succeeded in joining the Regent, but they were

at once driven to take refuge on a British warship and, after that, were quite unable to influence the march of events. Muhammad-al-Sadr, the President of the Senate, and Maulud Mukhlis, the President of the Chamber, both stood aloof, but, though disgusted with the proceedings of Rashid Ali and his army friends, they were afraid to move against them. Taufiq Suwaidi, Umar Nazmi, Ali Mumtaz, Abdul Mahdi and Sadiq Bassam, all members of Taha Pasha's last Cabinet, were at the outset full of fire against Rashid Ali and wanted to rally round the Regent. They soon lost heart, however, when they saw that none of the tribes were rising in defence of his Highness, and they then quietly effaced themselves in their homes. Nuri Pasha fled to Amman at the first sign of the coming of the storm and was joined there by Daud-al-Haidari. In contrast to the comprehensive and efficient measures taken by Rashid Ali and the military commanders, the preparations made by the Regent to meet the situation were pitiable. Although the dangers of a *coup d'Etat* must have been obvious for weeks before it took place, he and his advisers appear to have been taken completely by surprise. They seem to have assumed that the majority of the army and of the tribes was loyal and that it was therefore unnecessary to take any special precautions. They did not even make plans to leave Bagdad quietly and meet at some prearranged rallying-point should a sudden crisis render this course necessary. In consequence, although they were commonly supposed to have the major portion of the country behind them, they were defeated in an incredibly short time. They are now discouraged and unorganised, and it seems evident that the growth of any effective opposition to the present régime will be slow. The Regent is well liked, but his personality is not one to arouse the enthusiasm of the people. There are none in Iraq who would risk their lives to bring about his return. Of his followers, Jamil Madfai is probably the best, but, taken on the whole, they do not compare in vigour and resourcefulness with their opponents. They represent the more solid and slow-moving elements as contrasted with the youthful and fiery. No group of Iraqis has as yet held together for long and it may well be that the inevitable disintegration of the present régime will come about more from its own actions and its internal dissensions than from the strength of its opponents. At present it has established a firm control over the whole country and effective opposition is non-existent.

19. I am sending copies of this despatch to His Majesty's Ambassador at Cairo, His Majesty's Ambassador at Angora, His Majesty's Minister at Jedda, His Majesty's Minister at Tehran, His Majesty's High Commissioner at Jerusalem and to the Governor-General of India.

I have, &c.

KINAHAN CORNWALLIS.

[E 3426/1/93]

No. 18.

Sir Kinahan Cornwallis to Mr. Eden.—(Received June 30.)

(No. 148.)

Sir,

Bagdad, June 6, 1941.

WITH reference to my despatch No. 143 of the 28th April, I have the honour to submit the following report on events in Iraq from the arrival in Basra in the middle of April of the first convoy of British troops from India down to the signing of the armistice between the British and Iraqi forces on the 31st May.

2. So soon as the troops had disembarked, Rashid Ali began to press hard for the full recognition of the new régime by His Majesty's Government and the early movement of the newly arrived British forces along the lines of communication which they had come to open. I made it clear that His Majesty's Government would not give full recognition until the new Government had shown by their acts that they were really friendly, explaining that full discretion must be given to the General Officer Commanding to organise the lines of communication in accordance with military requirements. This second point was also discussed with the Iraqi Chief of General Staff by the General Officer Commanding, Basra, when he visited Bagdad on the 23rd April. He emphasised the need of time for the proper organisation of a base, and explained that a battalion of British troops was being flown from Basra to Habbaniya. He also told the Chief of General Staff of the probable arrival within a few days of a few more ships carrying men belonging to the formation which had already disembarked. The Chief of General Staff received this news well, but urged that something should be done quickly to show that we had no idea of keeping troops permanently at Basra.

3. On the 25th April, acting on your instructions, I called on the Minister for Foreign Affairs and informed him that, in view of Rashid Ali's friendly assurances regarding his general policy and of the co-operation shown by the Iraqi authorities in connexion with the landing of our troops at Basra, I had been authorised to enter into formal relations with the new Administration forthwith. I added that I had your authority to express the hope that further co-operation by the Iraqi Administration might provide evidence of their desire to fulfil the Anglo-Iraqi Alliance and thereby soon enable formal relations to be established.

4. Musa Shahbandar expressed his friendship for Great Britain and promised to use all his efforts to bring about an improvement in Anglo-Iraqi relations. He pressed hard, however, for early and full recognition and for the quick passage through Iraq of the troops which had been landed at Basra. He also spoke of the harm that had been done to our mutual relations by our failure to reassure the Arabs about the future of Palestine. An official communiqué on my call was published the following morning in the press. The key-note of the newspaper articles at this time was that, though Iraq would honour her word by allowing British troops to pass through Iraq, the Government were ready and determined to resist any attempt to violate the country's sovereignty and independence.

5. In the meanwhile the Iraqi reinforcements, which had been sent to Basra at the time of the arrival of the first convoy of British troops, were being withdrawn to Musayib and Bagdad, and one infantry brigade and one artillery brigade were brought down to Bagdad from Kirkuk.

6. The deduction to be made from these movements seemed to be that the Iraqi military commanders had given up any idea of holding Basra, but were taking steps to be in a position to see Bagdad securely under their control and to act against Habbaniya, if they wished to do so.

7. On the 28th April I sent my counsellor to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs to give notice of the impending arrival at Basra of three ships carrying about 2,000 men (of whom some 1,600 were non-combatant) belonging to the units and formations which had already arrived. About noon I received a message by telephone that the Iraqi Government were unable to agree to the arrival of these troops.

8. I at once asked for an interview with Rashid Ali, and he received me at the Serai at 4 o'clock in the afternoon. The Minister for Foreign Affairs was also present. They said that the Cabinet had considered the arrival of the three troop ships and had resolved to adhere to their previous decision that no more troops should land before those which had already arrived had begun to pass on out of the country (see paragraph 14 of my despatch No. 143 of the 28th April, 1941).

9. They insisted that, however widely article 4 was interpreted, it could not possibly be held to give His Majesty's Government the right to maintain any forces in Iraq, even in war time, other than the guards required for the treaty air bases. The retention of a British force at Basra was, they claimed, a violation of the treaty and would not be tolerated by the Iraqi people. Public opinion was already much upset by the fact that no transport arrangements had been made to move on any of the units which had been landed, and it was quite impossible for the authorities to consent to further arrivals, unless they could point to a corresponding exodus. As I reported at the time in my telegram No. 409, I did my utmost to persuade them to take a more reasonable view of the provisions of the treaty and of the troops required to organise a line of communications, but I was unable to move them. I warned them, nevertheless, that the ships would certainly come to Basra and that the consequences of opposition or obstruction would be serious.

10. Rashid Ali specifically stated that, if the troops were disembarked before the despatch northwards of those already in Basra, he would broadcast a denunciation of our action to the nation. He added that he could not be responsible for the consequences which might follow the inevitable outburst of popular feeling. His attitude in general was so unsatisfactory and the danger of a clash between British and Iraqi forces appeared so imminent, that I decided to order the immediate evacuation of all British women and children from Iraq.

11. I informed the two Ministers of this decision on the following morning and obtained from them a solemn assurance that all women and children would be allowed to leave the country in safety and that every facility would be given to enable them to do so. Plans for the evacuation of those in Bagdad were ready and were put into operation with success. All British and a number of other European and American women and children, numbering about 224 in all, were marshalled at the Bagdad Civil Air Port in the early afternoon of the 29th April and taken in Royal Air Force motor buses, lorries and cars to the air base at

Habbaniya. I am deeply indebted to the Air Officer Commanding and the officers under his command for their valuable and wholehearted assistance in this matter. The police arrangements at the point of assembly were also excellent, and the Director-General of Police was present himself to see that all went well. The whole party arrived safely at its destination and the Air Officer Commanding prepared for its onward movement to Basra by air during the next three or four days.

12. Plans which had been made for evacuating British women and children from Mosul, Kirkuk and other centres were also put into effect, but I have not yet been able to obtain reports of the measure of success achieved.

13. During the night of the 29th-30th April it was observed in Bagdad that the mechanised force of the Iraqi army under Lieutenant-Colonel Fahmi Said, including a quantity of mechanised artillery, moved out of its barracks in the Muaskar Rashid, and, having crossed the new King Faisal Bridge in Bagdad, continued to move in a westerly direction towards Falluja. This movement suggested a threat to the air base at Habbaniya, and it was reported to the Air Officer Commanding from the embassy by urgent telegram at about 2.30 A.M. on the morning of the 30th April. Some part, if not all, of this force was in position commanding the Habbaniya air base by first light on the 30th April, and shortly afterwards the Iraqi commander sent a message to the Air Officer Commanding demanding that there should be no flying nor any movement of forces outside the cantonment, and giving warning that the Iraqi authorities would shell aircraft attempting to take off from the aerodrome or armoured cars leaving the perimeter. This action immediately placed the British women and children who had arrived at Habbaniya on the previous afternoon in a position of great danger; it was a direct breach of the assurance which had been given and an act of gross treachery. The Air Officer Commanding informed me of this ultimatum, and shortly after noon I sent a member of my staff to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs with a written protest, coupled with a request that the Iraqi forces should at once be withdrawn from the vicinity of Habbaniya. I added that, if this were not done, responsibility for the consequences would rest with the Iraqi authorities.

14. The Iraqi reply claimed that the despatch of troops to Habbaniya was only a precaution taken in the face of the several threatening acts of His Majesty's Government, including the retention of forces at Basra, and made no reference to my request for the withdrawal of the Iraqi forces from the position which they had taken up around the air base. Throughout that day more artillery and infantry continued to march out to strengthen the Iraqi forces, and it became clear that it was their intention completely to surround and dominate the cantonment.

15. During the morning, as a precaution, I gave orders putting into operation an emergency scheme which brought about the protective concentration of the remaining British subjects within the precincts of the British Embassy and the American Legation. In all about 350 persons came to the embassy, and about half that number went to the American Legation.

16. The following day, the 1st May, passed quietly. The next step lay with the Air Officer Commanding, and, apart from assuring him that I would fully support any action which he might decide to take to deal with the situation at Habbaniya, there was nothing which I could do. During the course of the day he informed me that he had determined to issue an ultimatum to the Officer Commanding Iraqi Forces early the next morning, demanding the instant withdrawal of the forces surrounding his camp, and stating that he would attack if their withdrawal did not begin at once. In the evening I heard from him that the Iraqi forces had increased to such an extent, and had not only taken up artillery positions dominating his camp, but had penetrated after dusk into Humfryah, lying just outside the perimeter of the cantonment, with the result that he had decided to attack at 5 A.M. without giving any warning. A few minutes after this attack was due to begin I sent to Rashid Ali a written communication, informing him that, as no response had been made to my request for the withdrawal of Iraqi forces from the vicinity of Habbaniya, and as, moreover, the Iraqi army continued to concentrate increasingly large forces with hostile intent in the vicinity of the British air base, the Air Officer Commanding had been compelled to take appropriate action. I also warned him that, if the British Embassy or the American Legation were threatened, or if any harm were done to British subjects in Bagdad or elsewhere in Iraq, the Air Officer Commanding would at once take appropriate action. In their reply the Ministry for Foreign Affairs stated that they regarded the action of the Air Officer Commanding as a clear act of hostility directed against the rights and safety of

the country. From this time onward the embassy was cut off from all telephonic communication except with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and no further cypher telegrams from the embassy were accepted for transmission at the Central Telegraph Office. I was, however, in wireless communication until late on the night of the 2nd May. In addition, the embassy was surrounded by Iraqi police, and, in spite of the fact that in principle diplomatic relations had not been severed, no British subject was allowed to enter or leave the embassy precincts.

17. Appropriate pamphlets had already been drafted by His Majesty's Embassy in advance for distribution by such means as might be available. The texts had been telegraphed to the British military authorities at Cairo and the High Commissioner at Jerusalem in order that they might be distributed by aeroplane at the proper moment. Between 6 and 7 A.M. on the 2nd May His Majesty's Embassy took what steps were possible to arrange for a limited distribution of pamphlets in Bagdad itself in co-operation with air distribution which actually took place on the following day.

18. I think it necessary at this point to describe the state of tension which existed, especially during the first two days after fighting had begun. It had been considered by my military advisers that the bulk of the Iraqi army had no desire to fight against us, and that it would retreat in disorder after the first serious bombing attack. It is possible that this opinion was not confined to British circles, and the result of the initial fighting was no doubt unexpectedly heartening to Rashid Ali and the army commanders. Their forces had resisted the first onslaught of the great British Empire, and they had reason to hope for early and effective help from the Axis. For a brief intoxicating moment they felt themselves to be, and were hailed as, the leaders of a great Arab *risorgimento*. By propaganda, which employed all the tricks of the most up-to-date European models, the Government succeeded in infecting public opinion in Bagdad with something of their own high-strung reaction to the crisis. Public opinion in Iraq, as in all countries without intellectual habits, depends on public feeling, and the *de facto* Government did everything they could think of to play on the emotions of the people. By impassioned harangues broadcast in every coffee-shop, by poems, speeches and sermons, by martial music and processions of youth, they strove to stir up a patriotic and religious fervour for the struggle upon which they had embarked and to embitter the hearts of the people against Great Britain. I do not yet know to what extent they succeeded elsewhere, but in Bagdad they aroused popular excitement and enthusiasm to a high pitch. In such circumstances the safety of the British lives under my care in the embassy was a grave anxiety. A few rifles, a supply of ammunition and a small quantity of tear-gas bombs had been collected in the Chancery, and under the direction of Major-General Waterhouse and two officers of the British Military Mission these arms were distributed and the defence of the building organised. With these limited resources it was hoped that it would be possible to beat off any sudden attempt that might be made by a rabble to break into the premises, but it was of course clear that a few untrained men with rifles could not hope to defend the embassy against an organised attack, whether by Iraqi armed forces or by semi-organised civilian insurgents like the Palestinian mujahidin.

19. Our first line of defence was the police, of whom about twenty had been posted at our gates. Our own emergency defences could not be expected to hold out for long if the police failed. Apart from this dependence on the *de facto* authorities for protection, we were also dependent on them for electricity, water and all food and medical supplies. The reserves of food which had been collected in the embassy were soon reduced to a dangerously low level, and the large daily deliveries of fresh food and other supplies needed to maintain in health the 350 men, women and children of several different races who took refuge in my house could only be obtained through the goodwill and good offices of the authorities. I was obliged, therefore, to be more circumspect in my dealings with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs than I should have been had I been responsible only for the safety and welfare of a small official staff. I naturally assume full responsibility for every decision which I took, but I would add that I carefully considered each question as it arose in consultation with the senior members of my staff and with senior officials, such as General Waterhouse, the head of the British Military Mission, and Mr. Edmonds, advisor to the Ministry of the Interior. We were, and still are, of the opinion that during the first two days the fate of the embassy and of those living in it hung in the balance, and that the Iraqi authorities, deceived by their apparent success, were prepared to proceed to any lengths in the enforcement of their demands. We were dealing not with a properly constituted Government which, even though hostile, could be relied upon to observe the recognised procedure of international law, but with a number of desperate men

in league with the Axis Powers. The fact that successful operations round Habbaniya and the bombing of the military camps near Bagdad later induced the authorities to adopt a more moderate tone has not caused us to modify our opinion. My acquiescence in certain of the Iraqi demands referred to in the following paragraphs must necessarily be viewed in the light of the situation which had just been described.

20. In view of the danger of the situation, on the 2nd May I gave instructions for all secret archives and most cyphers to be burnt. I am sending a separate despatch giving details of the cyphers and other documents so destroyed.

21. Late in the evening (2nd May) I received a note from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs demanding the dismantling of the wireless transmitter and receiver which up to that time had been in use in the embassy. Apart from the rights of His Majesty's Government under article 3 of the annexure to the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty—and in this case the wireless apparatus was manned by the Royal Air Force personnel for the maintenance of wireless communication between the Air Officer Commanding and His Majesty's Embassy—I was very doubtful whether I could in any circumstances claim a right in international law to use a wireless apparatus, particularly as British forces were then fighting the forces of the *de facto* Government. The latter could justly assume that the apparatus would be used for military purposes, and the Iraqi military authorities would be more than likely to back up their demand by force. I was most anxious that Iraqi forces should not enter the embassy precincts and thus have the opportunity of remaining there permanently. In any case the wireless apparatus could not be worked without the continued supply of electric current which was under the control of the local authorities. In the circumstances I felt obliged to yield. In reply to the Ministry's note I pointed out, however, that their demand was a contravention of the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty, and I disclaimed all responsibility for the consequences which might ensue from compliance therewith, unless at the same time the Iraqi authorities granted facilities for the prompt despatch of telegrams from the embassy to all destinations through the Central Telegraph Office.

22. The next day the Ministry sent a second note on this subject informing me that it had been decided to confiscate all wireless apparatus in the use of foreign diplomatic missions, and asking me to surrender the apparatus which had been erected in the embassy. At the same time I was informed that the Ministry were prepared to accept from the embassy *en clair* telegrams for transmission from the telegraph office. As the transmitter and receiver had already been dismantled, I decided not to resist this second demand, and was prepared to hand over the apparatus to the representatives of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Defence who had come to take delivery. The representatives were not content, however, with surrender, but insisted on searching the Chancery buildings. I only acquiesced under the strongest protest and seized the opportunity to press for the restoration of domestic electric current which had, in the meanwhile, been completely cut off, thereby endangering the health of the large number of people living in the house and Chancery. (The danger to health was serious because the clearing of the septic tank which receives all the sewage of the embassy is entirely dependent on an electrically-operated pump.) My representations were successful and the supply of current was not again interrupted.

23. Later in the day a further demand was sent to me to allow representatives of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and of the Ministry of Defence to search not only the Chancery building, but also every room in the embassy house, and satisfy themselves that there was no other apparatus in our possession. In spite of this further flagrant infraction of diplomatic immunity from search, I had no other alternative but to accept the demand, under strong protest. Another small transmitter set, which was not in use, was discovered, and, with my consent, removed.

24. On the same day the Ministry for Foreign Affairs sent yet another note, stating that the flying of the British flag over the embassy at a time when Britain was waging war on Iraq would increase public excitement and, it was feared, provoke a regrettable incident. The Ministry, therefore, asked that the flag should not be flown. The position was not wholly free from doubt. I was advised that it could not necessarily be claimed that foreign diplomatic missions have a prescriptive right to fly their national flag daily over the buildings which they occupy. The usual custom was for missions to fly the flag only on their own national days or on the national days of the countries of residence. In Bagdad, for some reason, possibly dating from high commission days, a departure had been made from this custom, and the embassy and all foreign legations were in the habit of flying their flags daily throughout the year. To depart from this

custom was a grave step, but I felt that in the special circumstances there might be some justification in the Iraqi Government's contention that the flying of the Union Jack in the heart of the capital at that moment was provocative, and would render more difficult the authorities' task of protecting the embassy from danger of a mob attack. I felt also that there was every prospect that the authorities might themselves incite such an attack or send in an armed party to remove the flag themselves. I decided, therefore, unobtrusively to remove the Union Jack from the flagstaff on the roof of the embassy, where it ordinarily flies, and to hoist it from a staff in the grounds, where it would not be visible outside.

25. Another incident which marked the day was a request made orally by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs that the British managers of the Imperial Bank of Iran and the Eastern Bank, who were both in the embassy, should be asked to hand over their keys to the Iraqi authorities. The Ministry stated that the British manager of the Ottoman Bank (who had taken refuge in the American Legation) had agreed to hand over the keys of his bank on condition that the managers of the two other banks also agreed to do so. If the managers refused to hand over their keys the authorities would open the banks by force. After consulting with myself and the adviser to the Ministry of the Interior, the two managers in the embassy decided to authorise their representatives in the United States Legation to hand over their keys under protest in the face of *force majeure*. Whether the surrender of the keys actually took place I was unaware, as no contact existed between His Majesty's Embassy and the United States Legation. Details of the manner in which this action was taken, and of the situation of the banks under the control of Rashid Ali's Administration, will be reported in a separate despatch.

26. The 4th May was a second eventful day. In the early morning Wellington bombers were seen from the embassy dropping leaflets over the city. Shortly afterwards an official in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs telephoned to tell a member of my staff that these leaflets contained a threat that the Government offices in Bagdad would be bombed unless the Iraqi forces were withdrawn from Habbaniya within four hours. The official said that he had been instructed to inform the embassy that the Iraqi forces would not be withdrawn and that, if the Government offices in Bagdad were bombed, the Iraqi Air Force would retaliate by bombing all places inhabited by the British. This, of course, was tantamount to a threat to bomb His Majesty's Embassy and the United States Legation, where so many British subjects were congregated, and constitutes a further example of the flagrant disregard by the Iraqi authorities of international law and custom. This message was afterwards confirmed in a note from the Ministry.

27. The threat made in these leaflets came as a surprise, for I had understood that all ideas of bombing other than military targets had been dropped. I had already made it clear by telegram to the British military authorities on 1st May that I was strongly opposed to such action. As I saw it, the bombing of the Government offices would have united public opinion throughout Iraq against us, and aroused the fury of the Bagdad mob without in any way altering the military situation at Habbaniya. I therefore addressed an urgent telegram to the Air Officer Commanding, Middle East, the Air Officer Commanding, Habbaniya, and the General Officer Commanding, Basra, recalling my opinion that the bombing of civilians was undesirable. This telegram was sent off *en clair* through the Iraqi civil telegraph office.

28. Hardly had this action been taken before a police inspector arrived at the embassy gates with a note from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs asking that all Iraqi subjects within the embassy should be expelled and handed over to the inspector in charge of the police guard. It may have been that the Iraqi authorities were anxious to withdraw Iraqis from the danger zone of the British Embassy in case it were to be bombed, but I feared that the underlying purpose of this request was to get hold of all the Iraqi servants and to victimise them for having served the British, and I decided to reject it. A member of my staff discussed the matter with the Ministry by telephone, making my attitude clear, and was then informed that the reason for the request was that the wives of some men employed in the embassy had petitioned the Ministry, alleging that their menfolk were being forcibly detained and asking for their release. When it was explained that all Iraqis were free to leave, if they wished to do so, the Ministry were satisfied with a list of their names. I have a feeling, however, that the demand would have been pressed had it not been for the timely bombing of the military camps near Bagdad that morning.

29. The next event was the unexpected arrival of M. Ustum, my Turkish colleague. He came to acquaint me with his Government's offer of good offices to find a solution of the dispute between Great Britain and Iraq. He also told me that he had been invited by the Iraqi Ministry for Foreign Affairs to suggest that it was desirable that the action threatened in the leaflets dropped earlier in the morning should at all events be postponed so as to enable the Turkish offer to be considered in a favourable atmosphere. I showed him a copy of my telegram about bombing civilians, but explained that as I was cut off from all confidential communication with my own Government I was unable to express to them my views concerning the Turkish Government's offer. This visit, however, gave me the opportunity of explaining to M. Ustum the various humiliations to which His Majesty's Embassy was being subjected, with the request that his Government should be fully informed. Forty-eight hours later M. Ustum paid me another visit, complaining that he was unable to withdraw certain funds from the Ottoman Bank. He said that he had seen the Iraqi Minister, who had given him permission to visit me with the suggestion that the British bank managers should resume their functions under self-conduct, and this His Majesty's Government should provide sufficient funds to meet the liabilities of the British banks. I informed M. Ustum that I was not in touch with my Government, and that if he desired any action taken the Turkish Government should raise the matter in London. M. Ustum confirmed to me that he had acted on the request made to him by me at the conclusion of our previous meeting.

30. The next day, the 5th May, passed quietly, but in the evening the Ministry for Foreign Affairs again became active. They began with a telephone message informing me that the Iraqi authorities were willing to remove all British and Iraqi women and children from the danger zone at Habbaniya and asking for a list of names. I sent a reply explaining that the Air Officer Commanding at Habbaniya was responsible for the women and children in his cantonment and that any decision regarding them must rest with him. I suggested, therefore, that the commander of the Iraqi troops in the vicinity should be instructed to communicate the Iraqi Government's offer to the Air Officer Commanding direct. At the same time, I addressed an *en clair* telegram to the Air Officer Commanding informing him of the offer and leaving the reply entirely to his discretion. Two days later he sent a message by aeroplane telling me that, having forced the enemy to retire, he had been able to arrange to send the women and children to Basra by air without the need for Iraqi co-operation.

31. The next step on the part of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs was to send a note stating that the Iraqi Government had decided to establish control over the property of foreigners and to take over all the motor cars within the embassy except those belonging to members of the diplomatic staff. The Ministry asked that all these motor cars should be handed over at once to officials who had been sent to take them away. I decided to resist this demand to the utmost limit, and in my reply I asked to be informed under what law the decision in question had been taken, warned the Ministry that, if control was established over British property in Iraq, His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom would certainly take similar action against the property of Iraqi subjects in all territories under British rule, and finally pointed out that the demand made for the surrender of property located within the precincts of the embassy was a direct violation of international law. I am glad to say that I heard nothing more of this proposal.

32. Another note received from the Ministry late on the 5th May asked for a list of the names of all persons in the embassy of whatever nationality, accompanied by a certificate that it was complete, and an assurance that no one would be allowed to leave before the consent of the Iraqi authorities had been obtained. I replied asking to be informed of the purpose for which such a list was required, explained that all who were in the embassy had come voluntarily on my advice, and gave an assurance that so long as a state of emergency lasted I would, within the limits of my authority, continue to advise all concerned not to go outside the embassy grounds. There was, of course, no desire on the part of anyone to do so. This reply seems to have satisfied the Ministry, who did not again address me on this subject.

33. After the first few days, thanks largely to the help of the Protocol Department in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, a regular and sufficient supply of food began to be delivered daily, and the efficient arrangements made by voluntary workers made it possible for adequate, though simple, meals to be provided to all those who had been gathered within the embassy. Necessary medical stores were also obtained in the same manner. There were fortunately a

number of doctors and nursing sisters among our community, and with their help the sick were looked after and sanitary services organised to prevent epidemics. Owing to the efficient measures which were taken, the health of the community was throughout remarkably good. I should here like to pay a tribute to the civilian members of the community, who, under the direction of the military mission, were responsible for placing the embassy in a state of defence and for providing the necessary guards and patrols both by day and night.

34. The press attaché's staff distributed frequent news bulletins from material picked up from broadcasting stations, and a variety of entertainments and other distractions were organised to combat boredom. The spirit shown by the British community was altogether admirable.

35. I have made no mention of the British aircraft which passed daily over Bagdad for scouting and demonstration purposes, to drop pamphlets or to bomb military targets in the neighbourhood. There is no doubt that this air action had a very salutary effect, not only on the Iraqi authorities, but also on the population of Bagdad, which might otherwise have got out of hand and constituted a serious menace to the British community.

36. The week between the 6th and 13th May passed without noteworthy incident, except for an oral request from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs for permission to take away the forty-line private internal telephone exchange which the Telegraph Department had put into the embassy only a few days earlier. It was represented that this was urgently needed elsewhere, and I consented to its removal on condition that it should be replaced by another which would be adequate to ensure the maintenance of telephone communication inside the embassy premises. My condition was accepted and the exchange amicably carried out.

37. Late in the evening of the 13th May I received a note from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs stating that they had learnt that Iraqi prisoners of war were being kept at Habbaniya, and asking that, in accordance with international practice, they should be removed to places of safety. They added that if this were not done the Iraqi authorities would be obliged to act in a similar manner. I sent to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, for transmission to you, an *en clair* telegram summarising this note, and informed them that, as I was denied the right to send cypher telegrams, I could take no further action in the matter. The information contained in your telegram No. 467 of the 20th May that Iraqi captives would be removed from the Royal Air Force cantonment as soon as possible was communicated to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs on the 23rd May.

38. Between the 15th and 20th May the Ministry for Foreign Affairs were again active. On the 16th May they asked me to convey a protest to His Majesty's Government against the bombing of a military hospital at Fallujah on the 3rd May, and the bombing of military ambulances on the 12th and 13th May. They gave warning that the continuance of such attacks would "absolve the Iraqi forces from all responsibility if they acted in a similar manner." A second note protesting against the machine-gunning of a motor ambulance on the 13th May was delivered to me on the 19th May. The purport of these notes was sent to you in my telegrams Nos. 448 and 453. Air Headquarters, in commenting on these allegations, admitted that a stick of bombs aimed at another target had fallen into Fallujah, but denied that ambulances had ever intentionally been attacked. They pointed out, on the other hand, that Iraqi shells had hit three churches in Habbaniya, and had also fallen in the hospital grounds. Moreover, on the 16th May, six German aircraft had deliberately machine-gunned two British ambulances clearly marked with the Red Cross.

39. The next day it seemed possible that the demand made earlier for the expulsion of Iraqi servants from the embassy precincts would be revived (see paragraph 28). The head of the Protocol Department telephoned in the morning to say that, in view of the Iraqi Government's proclamation of the day before, the authorities desired all Iraqis remaining in the embassy to leave at once. He added an assurance that no harm would be done to them. I assumed that he was referring to a proclamation which had been referred to in the bulletins broadcast by the Bagdad Radio Station, warning all Iraqis in the service of the British Government that, unless they left their posts within seven days, they would be condemned to death and their property would be confiscated. I did not, however, know the full text of this proclamation, nor was it clear to me that it was necessarily intended to apply to Iraqi servants in the embassy.

40. I accordingly caused a semi-official reply to be sent to this message pointing out that it was contrary to accepted diplomatic practice that pressure of any kind should be brought to bear to compel the servants of a diplomatic mission to leave its service, and that, if the proclamation had been made requiring

Iraqis to leave the service of a foreign Government, it could not properly be applied to the employees of a diplomatic mission. The reply also asked that, if the Iraqi authorities decided to proceed further with the matter, I should be furnished with the text of the proclamation to which reference had been made, and I gave warning that, if the demand for the expulsion of the embassy's Iraqi servants were pressed, His Majesty's Government would no doubt take similar action against all Iraqi diplomatic missions and consulates in territories under their control.

41. The 18th May passed quietly, but on the 19th May, in addition to the second protest against the machine-gunning of a military ambulance on the road Fallujah-Bagdad which I have already mentioned, I received a note from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs stating (a) that on the 18th May a British aircraft had dropped pamphlets on Fallujah threatening the inhabitants that the town would be bombed owing to the location of Iraqi troops in that area, and (b) that, in the opinion of the Iraqi Government, the bombing of towns was a reprehensible act contrary to international treaties. The note ended with the warning that, if the British military authorities killed Iraqi civilians, reprisals must be expected against the British civilians in various cities in Iraq. Without in any way consulting His Majesty's Government, on whom the final decision rested, I explained to the Ministry that, if there was strong presumption that Iraqi troops were located in Fallujah, it would be quite legitimate for British aeroplanes to bomb it and that the wilful bombing of, or other reprisals against, British civilians in their present situation in Iraq would be an outrage which would no doubt lead to the strongest counteraction by His Majesty's Government. If, on the other hand, Fallujah were an open town, Iraqi troops would have to be withdrawn and a declaration to that effect made by the Iraqi Government. On the following day I learnt from the British Broadcasting Corporation that, before my reply was delivered to the Ministry, British forces had occupied Fallujah.

42. On the 21st May I received through the Ministry for Foreign Affairs your telegram No. 377, in which, with reference to the Iraqi note mentioned above, you instructed me to inform the Iraqi authorities that His Majesty's forces had so far scrupulously abstained from bombing any but military objectives in Iraq and to warn them that, if any acts of violence were committed against British subjects, such crimes would meet with drastic retribution. In their comment, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs stated that they had already made it clear that the Iraqi authorities would regard the bombing by British aircraft of non-military targets and the consequent shedding of innocent blood as a violation of international law, and that in such circumstances reprisals could not be regarded as unjustifiable; responsibility for the result of such reprisals would, they maintained, devolve on the party which had provoked them. They also protested against the machine-gun attacks which, they alleged, British aircraft had made on peaceful civilians with fatal results.

43. In acting on the instructions contained in your telegram, I drew particular attention to the unusual action of the Ministry in offering observations on a telegram addressed to the embassy before its contents had been communicated to me officially.

44. On the same day, the Ministry protested against the bombing by British aircraft of quarters of Mosul inhabited by civilians and the resulting death of thirty-two persons and the wounding of twenty-six, of whom the majority were old men, women and children. This protest was repeated to you in my telegram No. 456.

45. On the 26th May the Ministry complained that fences, defence works and a new aerial mast had been set up in the embassy grounds. They declared that all such activities were contrary to international custom, and demanded that the erections should immediately be taken down and that an assurance should be given that they would not be put up again. In my reply, after recalling the fact that the immunities enjoyed by a diplomatic agent covered his residence, and that I therefore had unfettered right to make whatever structural alteration or additions I might think necessary to the embassy, I explained that the work on wire fencing facing and in the vicinity of the river had been started by my predecessor to keep out cats and trespassers, that no aerials had been put up on the roof since the 3rd May, when, in blatant contravention of international law, and in spite of the strongest protest, an official from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, accompanied by experts, had searched the embassy and satisfied himself that there no longer existed any aerials for wireless transmitter sets. Further, I was able to explain that what was regarded by the Iraqi authorities as a newly constructed strong point was only, in fact, a corrugated-iron shelter for shower-

baths. The demand contained in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs' note and the arguments adduced in support thereof were so fatuous that I can only presume that the Ministry for Foreign Affairs were once more acting as a post office for the complaints of the military authorities, who, as a matter of fact, had for some unexplained reason taken over the protection of the embassy from the police for twenty-four hours at about that time.

46. After this I received no more tiresome notes from the Ministry, and each day artillery fire and bomb explosions sounded nearer and B.B.C. broadcasts announced the approach of our troops. We also learnt that pamphlets had been dropped announcing that the Regent would soon return to the capital.

47. On the 30th May the Lord Mayor of Bagdad, Arshad Beg Al Umari, telephoned to tell me that the Sharif Sharaf, Rashid Ali, his Cabinet and the four military commanders who had supported him, the ex-Mufti of Jerusalem and some thirty to forty other adherents of the short-lived rebel Government had fled the country, and that he, with the Director-General of Police, a senior army officer who had had nothing to do with Rashid Ali and his friends, and the Director-General of Irrigation, had set up a Committee of Internal Security to maintain order until the Regent could return and form a constitutional Government. The Lord Mayor said that he wished to see me as soon as possible and suggested that I should attend a meeting of the heads of foreign diplomatic missions which, with a view to stopping the fighting, he had called at the municipal offices. I excused myself and asked the counsellor to attend instead. The latter pointed out that no progress could be made unless full telephone, telegraph and wireless facilities were immediately restored to His Majesty's Embassy. Instructions were at once given and the Royal Air Force wireless transmitter was returned within half an hour. Apart from this, nothing occurred at the meeting which deserves record, and shortly after 4 o'clock in the afternoon the counsellor brought Arshad Beg and the newly appointed Acting Chief of the General Staff, Lieutenant-Colonel Nuruddin Mahmud, to see me at the embassy.

48. They asked for an armistice to enable the Regent to return and set up a constitutional Government, and I accordingly communicated their request to the General Officer Commanding by wireless telegram. In the meantime, however, British air and ground forces could be heard attacking the Iraqi positions on the outskirts and, as darkness came, the Lord Mayor telephoned urgently to ask that arrangements might be made to send out an Iraqi party with a white flag to arrange an immediate local suspension of hostilities, until the appeal for a general armistice had been considered.

49. The General Officer Commanding the columns operating against Bagdad met the Iraqi flag of truce at 4 o'clock the following morning about 8 miles outside Bagdad, and then sent me a message asking me to go out to see him before the armistice terms were settled. I arrived at the rendezvous at about 6 o'clock in the morning and brought back with me the terms prepared by General Clark and Air Vice-Marshal D'Albiac for a general armistice throughout Iraq. These were drawn up in consultation with me and with my approval. On returning to Bagdad I handed them to the Lord Mayor and the Acting Chief of General Staff, who took them to the Ministry of Defence for discussion with the remaining senior officers of the Iraqi army and the Committee of Internal Security. In the afternoon (31st May) Arshad Beg, together with General Ismail Namiq, Colonel Hamid Nasrat and Lieutenant-Colonel Nuruddin Mahmud, came to the embassy to discuss the terms. They wished at first to make some textual alterations with the intention of making the armistice appear to be the result of mutual agreement and not of terms offered by the victors to the vanquished. I explained, however, that I had no authority to amend the General Officer Commanding's draft, and after some discussion, in which I was supported by Arshad-al-Umari, the officers signed the armistice terms at 3.30 p.m. A copy of the text of the armistice, together with a translation of a letter covering the question of the Basra area and Washash Camp in respect of Iraqi troops is enclosed herein.

50. The next morning (1st June) the Regent reached Bagdad. He was accompanied, amongst others, by Jamil Madfai, Nuri Said and Ali Jaudat. I and my staff and the senior British officials in the service of the Iraqi Government went to meet his Highness some miles out in the desert on the Fallujah Road and returned with him to the palace, where he received the congratulations of members of the Diplomatic Corps and a large gathering of officials, notables and well-wishers. No representative of the Japanese Legation was present.

51. The Regent's return marked the close of Rashid Ali's attempt to overthrow the Constitution and govern the country with the aid of an army Junta

in alliance with the Axis Powers. It should not be assumed, however, that this event will bring to an end our political difficulties in this country and that Germany will sit still after this set-back. On the contrary, it must be expected that she will attempt to return to the attack at the opportune moment, and in the meantime continue to stir up trouble among the extreme Nationalist elements in this country, employing Rashid Ali, the fugitive officers and the Mufti and his following of collaborators.

52. People of all classes have been worked up into a state of bitterness and hatred towards Great Britain by Rashid Ali's fiery propaganda, and it will naturally take time for passions to cool down. Consequently neither the Regent nor the new Government which must now be formed will find it an easy task to restore tranquillity or to turn the minds of the people to regard with favour friendly co-operation with Great Britain and those who represent her in Iraq. I am hopeful, however, that given time and patience and provided that we can rely on the close co-operation of the Iraqi Government and the well-disposed elements of the Iraqi army, we shall be able to make considerable headway in restoring the present disastrous state of affairs. Much will depend on the courage and energy which the Iraqi Government display in combating their opponents and stamping out hostile activities.

53. In conclusion, I should like to express my gratitude to Mr. Paul Knabenshue, the United States Minister, who gave shelter and protection to 170 British subjects in the United States Legation during the whole period under review. His action, which at times involved personal risk, was the source of inspiration and encouragement to all, whilst his unstinted kindness and generosity have aroused nothing but admiration amongst the whole British community.

54. I am sending a copy of this despatch to His Majesty's Ambassadors at Angora and Cairo, His Majesty's Ministers at Tehran and Jedda, His Majesty's High Commissioner for Palestine and Transjordan, the Political Resident in the Persian Gulf, Bushire, the Political Agent, Koweit, His Majesty's Consul, Basra, General Headquarters, Middle East, the General Officer Commanding, Basra, and the Air Officer Commanding, Habbaniya, also to the Government of India.

I have, &c.

KINAHAN CORNWALLIS.

Enclosure in No. 18.

WHEREAS Iraqi representatives, who have temporarily assumed authority in Bagdad, have sought for an armistice, and in view of the fact that His Highness the Amir Abdul Illah is on his way to the capital to resume his legal functions, the General Officer Commanding British Forces has drawn up the following terms for an immediate armistice. The terms have been drawn up in harmony with the declared policy of His Britannic Majesty's Government, which is to abstain from any infringement of Iraq independence as formally laid down by treaty, and to afford His Highness the Regent every assistance in re-establishing legal government and assisting the Iraq nation to resume its normal and prosperous existence. His Britannic Majesty's Government have been led to adhere to these two bases of policy by the fact that they realise that the recent regrettable incidents in Iraq were not the outcome of any feeling of hostility between the British and Iraqi nations or of any divergence of interests between the two friendly peoples, but that these incidents were engineered solely by a small political party for their own private ends.

The armistice terms drawn up by the General Officer Commanding British Forces are as follows:—

- (1) All hostilities between the two armies will cease forthwith.
- (2) The Iraq army will be permitted to retain all its arms, equipment and munitions, but all units of the army must proceed forthwith to their normal peace-time stations.
- (3) All British prisoners of war, either military, Royal Air Force or civilians, will be released forthwith.
- (4) All enemy (German or Italian) service personnel will be interned, and their war material will be retained by the Iraq Government pending further instructions.
- (5) The town and vicinity of Ramadi to be vacated by the Iraq army by 12.00 hours, the 1st June.

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(6) All facilities will be accorded immediately to the British military authorities for unimpeded through communication by rail, road and river.

(7) All Iraqi prisoners of war now in the hands of the British will be handed over to His Highness the Regent as soon as the terms in the above-mentioned paragraphs have been duly complied with.

ISMAIL NAMIQ, *Brigadier*. GEORGE CLARK, *Major-General*.
H. NUSRAT, *Staff Colonel*. J. H. D'ALBIAC,
NURUDDIN MAHMUD, *Air Vice-Marshal, A.O.C.*
Staff Lieut.-Colonel.

May 31, 1941.

To His Excellency the British Ambassador.

(Translation.)

After Greetings.

WITH reference to the discussions which have taken place concerning the normal stations of the army, I want to make it clear that, in view of the present situation in Basra, it is difficult to reach the normal military stations there at once. Units of the 2nd Division will be placed in Washash.

ISMAIL NAMIQ, *Brigadier*.
HAMID NASRAT, *Staff Colonel*.
NURUDDIN MAHMUD, *Staff Lieut.-Colonel*.

Bagdad, May 31, 1941.

[E 4231/1/93]

No. 19.

Sir Kinahan Cornwallis to Mr. Eden.—(Received July 29.)

(No. 185.)

Sir,

Bagdad, July 11, 1941.

IN this despatch I continue the story of current political events from the point at which I concluded my despatch No. 148 of the 6th June.

2. The Regent's return on the 1st June was not welcomed by all classes. Rashid Ali's forceful propaganda had made too deep an impression for so sudden a change of public feeling to be possible. The army and police were largely sullen and resentful, and the people in the streets looked angrily at those who passed on their return from greeting His Highness at the Palace. Sensitive observers of public feeling forecast trouble and events soon justified them. Shooting, looting and rioting began in the streets of Bagdad about 3 o'clock in the afternoon and continued spasmodically throughout the night. The next morning (2nd June) the situation became steadily worse, and by about 10 o'clock the mob was out of hand, looting shops at will. Malicious persons deliberately encouraged attacks on Jews. A large number of Jewish shops and homes were looted and several hundred Jews were brutally murdered. The police force was for a time useless. Its discipline had been undermined by the political manipulations and fanatical propaganda of Rashid Ali's régime, and officers and men joined recklessly with the mob in breaking into and looting shops and houses all over the town. The Lord Mayor who, pending the formation of a new Government, was still nominally in control, begged the Director-General of Police to use his reserves and to order them to clear the streets and shoot to kill, but the Director-General pleaded that he could not accept responsibility for such drastic action unless specific orders were given by the Regent. After some delay the Regent sent the order in writing and also arranged for the despatch of troops to take control. The soldiers did their work well. There was no more aimless firing into the air; their machine-guns swept the streets clear of people and quickly put a stop to looting and rioting. In those few hours, however, hundreds of families were ruined and brutal outrages were committed which all right-minded persons will for long remember with shame and horror. The Jews suffered most, and there is no doubt that a large number of them would emigrate rather than face the risk of another such pogrom if they could only find a country to take them. Many have made pathetic attempts to obtain visas for India for themselves or their families, only to find this way of escape now closed.

3. There is evidence to show that the riots were instigated by certain officers in the army and police who took advantage of the temporary absence of responsible authority. Had a Government been formed earlier it is improbable that such a serious situation would have arisen. I had at my first interview with the Regent the previous day urged the extreme importance of forming a Cabinet at once, and I again impressed on him the necessity for immediate action when I saw him later that afternoon. The Regent was in a difficult position. Jamil Beg Madfai was the only apparent candidate. His name had been put forward by Arshad Beg at Umari and his temporary committee, and my enquiries failed to reveal anyone else who had the courage and influence to step into the breach. Jamil Beg, however, seemed to have no zest for the part. The Regent had been dissatisfied with his attitude during the later stages of their stay in Palestine, and knew that though generally sound in his views he was an ageing man lacking energy and purposefulness and too weak in character to be able to deal firmly with the problems which would face him. His Highness sought anxiously for alternatives, but found none, and was therefore obliged to call upon Jamil Beg to form a Cabinet. The latter refused and persisted in his refusal all that day. That night his friends brought pressure to bear on him and the following morning he sent the Lord Mayor and the present Minister of Finance to me with a message that he would accept if I would promise him my full support. This I promised to give, and he assumed office when the rioting was at its height. As every minute almost was of importance, the Regent gave him a free hand, and on the 3rd June the following appointments were announced:—

Prime Minister: Jamil Madfai.
Foreign Affairs: Ali Jaudat-al-Aiyubi.
Interior: Mustafa-al-Umari.
Communications and Works: Jalal Baban.
Finance and Justice: Ibrahim Kamal.
Economics: Nasrat-al-Farisi.
Education: Ridha-al-Shabibi.
Social Affairs: Ja'far Hamudi (appointed a few days later).

4. The new Government had much to do. Their immediate tasks were to re-establish relations with His Majesty's Government on the basis of the Treaty of Alliance of 1930, to punish rebels and rioters, to discipline the army, the police and the public services, to stamp out Axis propaganda and to change the heart of a great mass of the people.

5. For two or three days I had prolonged talks with the Prime Minister and the Minister for Foreign Affairs about the essential conditions of a good understanding with His Majesty's Government, and then, after I had formally given notice that in the opinion of His Majesty's Government a state of imminent danger of war had been reached, the Cabinet on the 5th June authorised the Minister for Foreign Affairs to communicate to me the following decisions:—

(a) The Iraqi Government agree that for the duration of the war, and for war purposes alone, His Majesty's Government may station their ground and air forces at such places as may be necessary for the defence of Iraq, subject to—

(1) the Iraqi Government being notified as far as possible in advance;
(2) due consideration being given to such observations as the Iraqi Government may make on account of local administrative necessities;

(b) The Iraqi Government agree to establish a postal and telegraphic censorship and to safeguard the interests of His Majesty's Government in these matters by employing in the department concerned a British official from among those in the service of the Iraqi Government. (A later letter informed me that British interests in the control of aliens in Iraq would be safeguarded in a similar manner);

(c) The Iraqi Government agree to the British military authorities exercising the necessary measure of control in co-operation with the Iraqi authorities over the base area at Basra and will issue orders to the Basra port authorities to co-operate fully regarding all measures necessary to facilitate and ensure the safe arrival of British forces at Basra.

I also received an oral assurance that relations with Italy would be broken off.

6. The decision about our troops has, up to the present, given good results. Our forces have moved everywhere without opposition and, with few exceptions,

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friendly co-operation has been given by the Iraqi police, military and civil officials. News of all movements is passed to the Ministry of Defence through the remaining officers of the Advisory Military Mission who now act as connecting link between Force Headquarters and the Ministry of Defence.

7. The press and postal censorship is beginning to get into its stride and, with the tactful use of the trained staff which the Middle East Command is providing, it should become more effective before long.

8. Details of the British co-operation which it is desirable to establish at Basra, both in the port and the base areas, are being studied, and in the meanwhile the provisional arrangements in operation are working reasonably well.

9. Relations with Italy were formally broken off on the 8th June and the Italian Minister and his staff left for Turkey via Syria on the following day. The Japanese Military Attaché installed during May has been obliged to leave and the Japanese Government have been informed that their present minister is *persona non grata* to the Regent.

10. To deal with the worst rebels and rioters, special courts have been set up in Mosul and Bagdad, and a large number of persons, including many of Rashid Ali's outstanding supporters, have been summarily arrested. A new director-general of police has been appointed, and many army officers have been placed on pension. Troublesome Palestinians and Syrian teachers have been packed off to their homes and new mutassarrifs have been appointed to most liwas. These measures have to some extent improved the situation, but they have not been carried out with enough energy to make them fully effective.

11. The departure of the Mufti and the Italian Legation has deprived pro-Axis and anti-British propaganda of its motive force, but the adherents of Rashid Ali, the many convinced pro-Nazis in the army and the public services, and the irrecoverable anti-British elements in all parts of the country, are maintaining a widespread opposition to the Government and their endeavours to cultivate a public spirit more friendly towards Great Britain.

12. The Government began their own propaganda campaign very warily, and I had much to do to persuade them to quicken and strengthen it. Gradually they gained confidence and by the end of June, both in the press and on the radio, they were attacking their opponents with good effect. Their handling of the soldiers and officials has been less successful and too many prominent supporters of Rashid Ali's régime have been released from prison after only a few days' detention. The Government are now talking of an internment camp for the worst of their political opponents and this seems to be the only solution of a difficult problem. The Government are also collecting evidence for impeachment of Rashid Ali and his Cabinet for treason and have taken powers to try them *in absentia*. Up to the present no action has been taken against Rashid Ali's chief tribal supporters, a fact which is causing resentment among those who remained loyal to the Regent.

13. The Government have made a creditable attempt to improve their representation abroad. The minister at Angora, the chargé d'affaires at Kabul, the consul-general at Beirut and several consuls and secretaries known for their pro-German activities have been recalled and a new minister has been sent to Tehran, who, it is hoped, will bring pressure to bear on the Iranian Government to impose effective restrictions on Rashid Ali, the Mufti, the Golden Square and their followers, now refugees in Iran.

14. Southern Kurdistan is providing a further difficult problem for an already much-embarrassed Administration. Sheikh Mahmud, the outstanding Kurdish tribal leader, escaped from his forced detention in Bagdad towards the end of May. From 1923 until his surrender in 1931 he fought continuously against all established authority, British or Iraqi, in the name of Kurdish independence, and ten years of exile from his own hills have evidently wrought little change in his proud and unruly character. After his escape he returned to his old haunts in Sulaimaniya and, having gathered fighting men around him, was about to attack Sulaimani when the Rashid Ali Government fell. The restoration by British forces of a constitutional Government offered a prospect of sympathetic British intervention in Kurdish interests and Sheikh Mahmud held off his attack to see what could be gained by negotiation. The Government thereupon sent a Kurdish official, Mustafa Qaradaghli, to talk with him and, at the same time, collected forces in Sulaimani as a warning. Sheikh Mahmud's proposals included the transfer to the Kurds themselves of the control of law and order, the administration of the Kurdish districts through a locally appointed committee of Kurds and the creation of a special voluntarily enlisted force for garrison duties in the Kurdish districts. These proposals were unacceptable to the Iraqi

Government, who saw in them a long first step towards Kurdish autonomy. They also felt, with good reason, that Sheikh Mahmud, with his out-of-date tribal outlook on political questions and his treacherous nature, was not a man with whom any lasting arrangements could be concluded. They therefore adopted the plan of detaching his tribal allies by offers of concession to their local interests and of depriving him of any support which the educated Kurds might otherwise give to him by attempting to redress their grievances. The Kurds have long complained of the deliberate neglect of the Bagdad Government and there is a widespread feeling that the present moment is propitious to extort concessions. Some Kurds go so far as to dream of autonomy, while others would be satisfied with real equality within the Iraqi State. Some, like Sheikh Mahmud, still apparently hope that Great Britain will even yet see that the Kurds have a fair deal and are never tired of telling us how much better friends they would have been to us than the Arabs, for whom we have done so much and from whom we have received so little gratitude. Others take the line that the Kurds obviously do not fit into British policy and that it would be foolish to expect us to upset the Arabs for the blue eyes of the Kurds, and that if ever they are to have a future as a nation they must fight for it themselves. The Iraqi plan for dealing with the immediate manifestation of this chronic element of internal unrest is in principle sound, and if carried out in a generous and sympathetic spirit will probably succeed. But the Prime Minister is bigotedly anti-Kurd, and unlikely to handle the problem with friendliness and foresight. The adviser to the Ministry of the Interior, an expert in Kurdish affairs, tells me that in discussions with Iraqi politicians he frequently senses in some of them a vindictive feeling that they would prefer to lose Kurdistan rather than secure them as loyal Iraqis by acknowledging their existence *qua* Kurds; they are ready to contemplate evacuation of the Kurdistan areas but never a really liberal policy. Sheikh Mahmud sent a confidential messenger to me with good wishes and protestations of obedient friendship towards His Majesty's Government. I returned thanks with a pointed reminder that in this time of war His Majesty's Government did not wish to be burdened with troubles in Iraq, and that in the large British forces now in Iraq they had the means to put a stop to any such embarrassments to their war effort. For the moment the situation is quiet; Sheikh Mahmud has promised to disperse his armed band and the Government have given him permission to live in one of his villages near Sulaimani. It cannot be hoped, however, that this truce will last for long.

15. People of all classes in Iraq continue to follow external events with close interest, but recent war developments have not greatly influenced Iraq's internal affairs. The Free French declaration of the independence of Syria and the Lebanon made on the 6th June and the declaration of His Majesty's Government associating themselves therewith were both well received and well advertised by the Iraqi Government. These statements of policy gave confidence to our friends but did not appreciably change the views of the solid mass of our obstinate enemies. Your own Mansion House statement on British policy towards the Arabs and their national aspirations made an excellent impression at the time, but it is, I fear, now beginning to be forgotten and it would be good from all points of view that an early opportunity should be sought to have it recalled and repeated in an authoritative manner. Germany's attack on Russia is regarded by many as increasing British chances of victory, but the pro-Germans have been working hard to convince everybody that Russia will quickly collapse and leave the road to India open to the German army.

16. To sum up the general situation I would say that though they have made some progress the Government have not yet consolidated their position. The tribes are quiescent and their leaders are for the most part friendly, but the army is a potential element of danger. There the bitterness of defeat still kindles the fires of hatred of the British under the ashes of appeasement, and news of the eastern march of German forces might well be taken as a signal for a fresh attempt to destroy our position in this country. I am myself taking all possible steps to make such a possibility more remote. After a long period of ostracism, the way to the Embassy is now open and I have visitors—tribal and others—from all over the country. With the reorganisation of our propaganda machine and the activities of the newly-formed Political Advisory Staff, I have hopes of regaining an appreciable portion of the ground which we have lost throughout the country. Much will depend on the length of the present respite and on the course of the war, but, granted reasonably good fortune, I see no reason why we should not be able to place ourselves in a far stronger position to resist any subversive attack against us from within the country in the future.

The future of the Regent and of his Government is linked with ours in this matter. I am doing what I can to strengthen them and have enlisted their support for my plans.

17. I am sending copies of this despatch to Mr. Oliver Lyttelton at Cairo, His Majesty's Representatives at Angora, Cairo, Tehran and Jedda, His Majesty's High Commissioner for Palestine and Transjordan, the Political Resident in the Persian Gulf, the Political Agent at Koweit, His Majesty's Consuls at Basra and Mosul, the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Middle East, the Commander-in-Chief East Indies Station, the General Officer Commanding British Troops in Iraq, the Air Officer Commanding Royal Air Force, Habbaniya, the Combined Middle East Intelligence Centres, Cairo and Iraq, the Jerusalem Bureau and to the Government of India.

I have, &c.

KINAHAN CORNWALLIS.

[E 4820/1/93]

No. 20.

Sir Kinahan Cornwallis to Mr. Eden.—(Received August 20.)

(No. 201.)

Sir,

Bagdad, July 25, 1941.

I HAVE the honour to transmit herewith a copy of a despatch from His Majesty's Consul, Basra, giving an account of events in Basra between the 2nd May and the 31st May.

2. It will be seen that during this period Commander Weld-Forester and his staff were confronted with a variety of difficult and often dangerous situations, and that they met these difficulties with commendable resourcefulness and devotion to duty.

3. I trust, therefore, that you will authorise me to convey to Commander Weld-Forester your appreciation of the excellent work done by himself and his staff at a time when, cut off as it was from all contact with the Embassy, very heavy responsibilities devolved on His Majesty's Consulate at Basra.

I have, &c.

KINAHAN CORNWALLIS.

Enclosure in No. 20.

Consul Weld-Forester to Sir Kinahan Cornwallis.

(No. 17. Secret.)

Sir,

Basra, July 16, 1941.

I HAVE the honour to give the following account of the course of events in Basra between the interruption of communications with Bagdad on the 2nd May and the signing of the armistice between the British and Iraqi forces on the 31st May. I have prefaced the account itself with a short résumé of events following the arrival of the first convoy on the 18th April, designed to supplement and complete reports made to your Excellency at the time which, owing to pressure of work and urgency, had to be made mainly by telegram and telephone.

2. It will be recollected that there was some delay in the arrival of the first transports, which should have berthed at Margil on the 18th April at the same time that the first airborne troops arrived at Shaiba. They did not, however, actually arrive at the port until the 19th April.

3. Meanwhile on the 18th it was still not clear that the arrival of troops would be unopposed by the Iraqi forces until 2½ hours before the airborne troops were due at Shaiba, which place was half surrounded and threatened by Iraqi forces. The acting mutessarif, Saleh Hammam, telephoned at half past two only to inform me that he had received instructions to afford facilities. The delay in making this communication was, I understand, occasioned by the attitude of the Commanding Officer Southern Area, Colonel Rashid Jaudat, who had already shown his sympathies with Rashid Ali at the time of the arrival at Basra of the Regent and who apparently concealed the fact that he had received instructions early that morning not to oppose a landing.

4. I had previously arranged with the Senior Naval Officer, Persian Gulf, to detain the steamship *Silverbeech*, the only ship then in port, in order that British subjects, including Indians, and friendly aliens might be evacuated in her should hostilities break out and, on the morning of the 18th, in consultation with Commodore Graham, I gave verbal instructions to the agents for the ship to be provisioned with sufficient food and water for four hundred people on the voyage to Bombay and with as much secrecy and haste as possible. In the event she was not required.

5. Nothing of note which has not been reported elsewhere occurred between this date and the arrival of the second convoy on the 29th April, when I was again obliged to make preparations for evacuation. No vessel being immediately available at that time, it was arranged to evacuate, if necessary, by river craft to the Royal Air Force Station, Margil, from whence it was intended to transfer the civilian population later to empty troopships of the second convoy.

6. When news was received on the 30th April that Habbaniya was being surrounded the general officer commanding instructed me to inform the acting mutessarif that, in view of events in the north, he was bound to take certain steps to safeguard his troops, and intended to occupy the port area. He did not, however, desire to take over the duties of the police, whom he would expect to remain at their posts, but he must request that they be ordered to return their arms and ammunition to the armoury in order to avoid any possibility of trouble. Saleh Hammam agreed to this procedure and necessary arrangements were carried out almost without incident, despite a certain truculence on the part of the port police.

7. On the following day, the 1st May, the first planes with women and children evacuated from Habbaniya arrived. On the 2nd May, after hostilities had commenced, General Fraser informed the acting mutessarif and Brigadier Ibrahim Pasha El Arawi that he must insist that the military barracks at Jubaila be evacuated and all Iraqi troops withdrawn fifteen miles up river from Gurmat Ali, at which place those already withdrawn from the barracks near Zubeir had taken up position and were digging themselves in. He gave a time limit by which the requisite movements must be carried out, failing which he would order H.M.S. *Yarra* to bombard the troops at Gurmat Ali and would take such action against Jubaila as was necessary.

8. Obstructive and delaying tactics were adopted by Saleh Hammam culminating in the alleged disappearance of Ibrahim Pasha, who could not, therefore, give the necessary orders. Consequently no adequate movement of Iraqi troops had taken place by 2.15 P.M., the time fixed. General Fraser accorded a quarter of an hour's grace, after which, instead of H.M.S. *Yarra* opening fire, Vincent aircraft from Shaiba flew over Jubaila Barracks and Gurmat Ali. No bombs were dropped on Jubaila, but heavy rifle and machine-gun fire was opened on the aircraft, which were flying low. One was hit and subsequently failed to recover from a dive-bombing attack on the Gurmat Ali positions. One other Vincent was also brought down, but the Iraqi troops withdrew beyond the areas General Fraser had said they must vacate.

9. More aircraft from Habbaniya with women and children evacuees landed at the airport on the 2nd May. The last two, which arrived in the afternoon, had both been fired on as they took off, and the wings and bodies were holed in various places by shrapnel and machine-gun bullets. Fortunately no one was hit. The courage and spirit of all under such an ordeal was remarkable. Doubtless the story will one day be told adequately of how children of three and four thought it a novel and amusing game to crouch behind walls keeping their heads down and making their dolls do the same while waiting for the shelling to die down so that they could make a dash for the waiting aircraft.

10. Although planes from Habbaniya arrived on the succeeding days, no more women and children were evacuated until the 5th May, by which time the Iraqi forces had been forced back sufficiently to allow planes to take off without undue risk. By the 7th all European women and children had been safely brought to Basra, the wives of the embassy staff, with the exception of those with small children, having all remained until the last plane to leave. On the following day all available accommodation was required for wounded, but between the 9th and the 23rd May all the Indian families were successfully evacuated.

11. From the 1st May onwards arrests and intimidation of contractors, interpreters and other local inhabitants employed by the forces, already too frequent, assumed intolerable proportions. Labour in the port became increasingly scarce and native women and children living in the Margil area packed up their few belongings and trekked in ever-increasing numbers into Basra.

City or across the river to Tanooma. Fresh supplies were almost unprocurable by the forces, stones were thrown at military transport, and incidents involving the British troops were multiplied and exaggerated. Even the domestic staffs of British residents were interfered with and cooks found it almost impossible to shop in the bazaar. The attitude of the local authorities continued to be superficially correct, but there can be no doubt that they were encouraging the non-co-operative attitude of certain sections of the population and even instigating it.

12. On the 2nd May Saleh Hammam received instructions from Bagdad to arrest and intern all British subjects. This he refused to do on the reasonable grounds that it would provoke immediate counter-measures by the military forces.

13. Eventually, the general officer commanding decided he must make a limited and temporary occupation of Ashar to forestall any attempt by the local authorities to embarrass him by forcibly removing the currency reserves from the British banks on which the forces were dependent for funds, to protect British lives and property and to endeavour to ensure supplies of fresh provisions. Complete secrecy was considered to be the best policy and no one unconnected with the forces, not even myself, was informed of the proposed operations. The first I knew of them was when awakened at 4.30 A.M. on the 7th May by a considerable volume of rifle and machine-gun fire. On looking out of the window I saw Gurkhas creeping through the consulate garden and marines from H.M.S. *Emerald* landing at the consulate jetty. The complete secrecy thus maintained made it impossible for me to concentrate into a safe area outlying British subjects and friendly aliens who might have been caught between two fires or molested by undisciplined elements of the population. Fortunately, nobody suffered any hurt.

14. The area from the mouth of Ashar creek south-eastwards for about half a mile along the river front, where the majority of British firms have their offices and houses, was occupied with little resistance from the handful of police stationed there, but, when an attempt was made to advance inland along Strand Road beside Ashar creek and into the bazaar quarter, considerable rifle and machine-gun fire from both police and populace was encountered.

15. By 8.30 A.M. Strand Road was in our hands and I accompanied General Fraser to the mutessarifiyeh with the object of endeavouring to induce Saleh Hammam to use his influence to persuade the police to cease firing. He immediately got up and offered his own desk to the general, who, however, explained he had no intention of taking over the administration or of usurping any of the functions of the mutessarif. After some slight discussion in which Saleh Hammam made it clear that he was not prepared to carry on local administration in any area occupied by British troops, he called up the police barracks and did his best to persuade the Commandant of Police to cease fire. The latter was reluctant to do so, but finally yielded to Saleh Hammam's reiterated argument that it was no part of the duties of the police to resist a military force, and that such resistance could not be effective and must, if prolonged, lead to unnecessary bloodshed.

16. The question of principle having been decided, the details of the withdrawal of the police from their positions and the surrender of their arms remained to be determined. The commandant wished to pile arms in the police barracks, leaving them under the guard of eight policemen until the military could take over the barracks, while the remainder of his men, numbering some 50 or 60, marched out under a white flag.

17. General Fraser was unable to agree to the arms being left in the barracks where they might be looted by the crowd despite the guard or with the connivance of the latter. The Police Commandant eventually agreed to let his men bring their arms out and pile them in front of the mutessarifiyeh, but requested that, to avoid any possibility of an incident, the road along which they would march after crossing Ashar creek should be cleared of troops. This also General Fraser was unable to accept, and finally the commandant agreed to march his men out in two parties under white flags with their arms.

18. A liaison officer was immediately sent to warn the troops in the vicinity not to fire on the police. As ill luck would have it a stray sniper shot a Gurkha, who was guarding the bridge over the creek, in the throat, mortally wounding him, only a few seconds before the police appeared in sight down the narrow bazaar street. Another Gurkha immediately gave a burst from his Bren gun and the leading file of police walked straight into the fire, three being mown down. The remainder broke and scattered, many handing their arms to the crowd. The acting mutessarif was extremely upset at this unfortunate incident, and any possible hope of obtaining his co-operation was finally dissipated.

19. The military authorities were not prepared forthwith to undertake the difficult and costly operation of cleaning up the bazaars, having already lost two men killed and twenty-six wounded, and they contented themselves for the whole of that day and the next with holding the area already occupied.

20. Lawless elements seized the opportunity thus provided to loot the Ashar bazaars. In at least one case the members of a rich and respected family did not, at any rate, restrain their retainers from taking part in the disorders, and there are strong grounds for thinking that, faced with the alternative of loot or be looted, they chose the former.

21. In actual fact the looting was not by any means as thorough as it might have been, and any shopkeeper who showed courage and determination seems to have escaped. One Indian trader, who had only just imported £5,000 worth of goods, saved his entire stock for a re-insurance of 20 dinars by the simple expedient of standing at the door and offering anyone who threatened to break in the sum of one dinar to go and loot some one else.

22. While the British troops were now in control of most of the area where British and friendly aliens live and I had been able to call in others living in the vicinity, the American Mission buildings were still just outside the occupied area, and three lady members of the mission staff were marooned in Basra City. Arrangements were made whereby the inhabitants of the mission compound, who did not wish to leave their quarters until absolutely necessary, could, at a moment's notice, pass through the sentries to the protected area, but it was still necessary to bring in the three ladies from the old city. Mr. Sarell volunteered to enter Basra City, accompanied by an R.A.F. officer and bring them away. With some misgivings I gave my permission. They entered the town from the landward side and went first to the jail, where they asked permission to telephone to the mission. The superintendent and his staff were very helpful and insisted that it was unsafe to enter the town as rioting was going on. It was ascertained that the three ladies were safe and sound in their house, the vicinity of which was quiet. The approach was, therefore, made by an alternative route through the date gardens, and they were duly collected and taken to Dr. van Ess's compound. While their removal from Basra City was actually carried out without any trouble or incident, to approach even the outskirts of the old town at that moment, far beyond the protection of British troops, was not entirely an agreeable prospect and might have been fraught with considerable danger.

23. For the next seventeen days Ashar was deprived of all administrative and municipal services, except electric current and water supplied from the Port Directorate Power House via the Ashar sub-station, which was guarded by British troops. The mutessarif withdrew to Basra City, where he kept good order until the 16th May, on which date he suddenly informed my Turkish colleague that he had received instructions to go to Bagdad and that he was taking with him all officials. This meant the town would be left at the mercy of lawless elements.

24. My Turkish and Persian colleagues, whose residences are situated between Ashar and the old town, some way from the area which was guarded by British troops, came to me in great perturbation and asked for military protection for their houses. I immediately communicated with the military authorities, but was told that it was impossible to extend the area of occupation. All I could therefore do for M. Okdai and M. Fahimi was to offer them and their families and staff asylum in this consulate. Meanwhile, the telephone rang without ceasing and notables, professional men and merchants begged that the British should take steps to prevent the looting, rape and murder which was universally expected. I could only reply that the policy of His Majesty's Government was not to interfere in any way with the local administration or to occupy any quarter which was not essential to the safety of the troops, and that therefore the military could not intervene.

25. The notables then took steps to recruit night watchmen, and many gave asylum in their own homes to Jews and other members of minorities who were in fear of their lives. That night and the following day the city was looted with considerable thoroughness, but I have not heard of any cases of murder, rape, or even wounding. Undoubtedly, the temper of the crowd never approached that degree of ferocity shown by the Bagdadis in the first days of June.

26. Meanwhile, every effort was being made by the general and his political officers to induce the local notables to form a Council of Administration for Basra and Ashar. While, however, the latter were doing all they could individually to maintain a semblance of order, they were still nervous of entering into any kind of combination or association to restore normality lest they be accused of compliance with British wishes, and thereby incur the displeasure of the Rashid Ali régime.

27. It was not until the 24th May that events seemed to be moving sufficiently towards a stabilisation of the British position in the country for them to be prepared to combine and issue an unsigned proclamation to the people, in which it was stated a committee had been elected by the Baladiya Council to ensure order and the resumption of essential services. The four individuals who showed the most courage and took the most active part on this council were Sheikh Saleh Bashayan, Hajji Mustafa Taha Salman, Syed Abdur Razzak-el-Emir and Syed Mohamed Saleh-er-Ridhaini.

28. On the 25th May his Excellency Syed Jamil Madfai arrived by air to take control of the Basra, Muntafiq and Diwaniyeh Liwas, and on the 26th May Lieutenant-Colonel Sargon, who had previously been British Inspector of Police in Basra until his resignation in July last, arrived to commence reorganising the police force. The following day one inspector and twenty men offered themselves for re-employment, and two days later more men were seeking engagement or re-engagement than were required. On the 29th May Syed Jamil Madfai flew to Habbaniya to join the Regent, and on the 5th June Syed Abdur Razzak Hilmi, with a complete administrative staff, arrived to take over the office of mutessarif.

I have, &c.

WOLSTAN WELD-FORESTER.

[E 6476/1/93]

No. 21.

Sir K. Cornwallis to Mr. Eden.—(Received October 9.)

(No. 1139.)
(Telegraphic.)

Bagdad, October 8, 1941.

IN continuation of my telegram No. 1132. After arrival of Nuri the Regent and I put strong pressure on him to join Ibrahim Kemal. They have not spoken to each other for five years and, though we [group undecypherable : ? got] Nuri to the point of promising to support Ibrahim Kemal outside the Cabinet, we failed to persuade him to join it. Ibrahim Kemal thereupon told Regent he could not form a Cabinet. He has, in fact, lost ground during the last fortnight and it has become evident that he does not at present command public support. If he works intelligently, his chance may come hourly.

2. The Regent then called on Ali Jaudat on my advice, but he refused. The only other possibilities were Nuri or Jamil Madjai and, since there is no hope of effective reform under latter and his return would be embarrassing to Regent, I agreed to Nuri's nomination. He is now trying to find colleague in consultation with Regent and myself. He has offered Ibrahim Kemal his choice of this Ministry, but latter has refused.

3. I hope it is realised that formation of a good Cabinet in Iraq is an impossibility owing to lack of capable men. I do not like the idea of Nuri, but it is a question of him or Jamil Madjai premiership and my preliminary talks with Nuri have left me with the impression that he will at all events begin well (see my immediately following telegram).

[E 6477/1/93]

No. 22.

Sir K. Cornwallis to Mr. Eden.—(Received October 9.)

(No. 1140.)
(Telegraphic.)

Bagdad, October 8, 1941.

MY telegram No. 1139.

Nuri this morning outlined his policy to me as follows:—

(1) He will carry out treaty in fullest sense of the word and co-operate with us fully in our schemes of defence and expansion of communications.

(2) He will himself take over defence and reorganisation of army with object of creating an efficient force capable of keeping the country in order. He spoke of 25,000 men as a maximum and 15,000 as a minimum. His present idea is to have it half-voluntary and half-conscripted. He wants exempted most of the tribes from conscription (this will be very popular).

(3) He will put all dangerous fifth columnists in a concentration camp at Fao and weed out anti-British officials. In making his choice he will act in consultation with adviser to Ministry of Interior and other British officials. I impressed on him the danger of his taking revenge on old enemies.

(4) He intends to proceed vigorously with the trial of Rashid Ali and his followers.

(5) He will [? group omitted] British officials and ensure that they are in a position to work effectively. He wants five or six land settlement officers at once and spoke (somewhat more vaguely) of British administration inspectors and police officers and of recruiting during the war officials who will take the place of those who will leave on account of age after it.

(6) He regards reorganisation of education as of equal importance to that of defence and intends to purge it of anti-British teachers at once, to recast unsuitable text books and to eliminate unnecessary schools. He wants to start a new school on British public school lines with British masters (in a reorganised Faisal college). He was a little unsatisfactory about Hamley, but I persuaded him to agree to the idea of appointing him as adviser. I am telegraphing separately about this.

(7) He will reorganise and strengthen Propaganda Department.

(8) He will close down French Legation and intends also to close Japanese Legation.

(9) He is having three Shiahs in [sic: ? and] two Kurds in the Cabinet and says that he realises the importance of gaining goodwill of both by redressing their grievances.

(10) He has promised to do nothing without our consent regarding Arab Confederation and Palestine and Syrian questions during the war.

(11) If he fulfils half of his assurances, the millennium will have arrived, but they show at all events that his heart is at present in the right place.

[E 6518/1/93]

No. 23.

Sir K. Cornwallis to Mr. Eden.—(Received October 10.)

(No. 1145.)
(Telegraphic.)

Bagdad, October 9, 1941.

CABINET will be formed as follows to-day:—

- (1) Prime Minister and Acting Minister of Defence: Nuri Said.
- (2) Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs: Saleh Jabr.
- (3) Minister of the Interior: Saleh Jabr.
- (4) Minister of Economics: Sayyid Abdul Mahdi.
- (5) Minister of Justice: Sadiq Bassam.
- (6) Minister of Finance: Ali Mumtaz.
- (7) Minister of Education: Tahsin Ali.
- (8) Minister of Social Welfare: Jamal Baban.
- (9) Minister of Communications and Works: Amin Zaki.

Comments:—

(a) (3) and (4) have reputation of being the most capable Shiahs.

(5) is also a Shiah. All have held office before. This is the first time that Minister of the Interior has been a Shiah, and the appointment will be much appreciated by the Shiahs.

(b) No. (6) ex-Minister and is considered by adviser to be best available man for finance.

(c) No. (7), now Nutesarif, most likely is new to office. Will carry out Prime Minister's policy.

(d) (8) and (9) are Kurds and ex-Ministers. Increase in representation will please the Kurds.

(e) All the above are believed to be pro-British.

(f) Nuri is keeping the Ministry for Foreign Affairs open for the present. He intends to try and get Tewfik Suwaidi when trial of the latter's brother [two groups undecypherable] is over.

(g) I read out to Nuri to-day my telegram No. 1140. He confirmed it and assured me that his colleagues are in full agreement with his policy.

(h) Nuri consulted me throughout and list is best we could devise with material available.

[E 7772/7772/93]

No. 24.

Sir Kinahan Cornwallis to Mr. Eden.—(Received November 25.)

(No. 311.)

Sir,

Bagdad, November 6, 1941.

WITH reference to Sir Basil Newton's despatch No. 403, Confidential, of the 31st August, 1940, I have the honour to transmit to you herewith my annual report on the heads of Foreign Missions in Iraq for the year 1941.

I have, &c.

KINAHAN CORNWALLIS.

Enclosure in No. 24.

Report on Heads of Missions at Bagdad.

(Passages marked with an asterisk reproduced from previous reports.)

Afghanistan: Abdur Rahman Khan, Minister (October 21, 1941).

Although an Iraqi mission, headed by a chargé d'affaires, has been established at Kabul since November 1940, I received no warning that it was proposed to appoint an Afghan representative to Bagdad. The arrival of Abdur Rahman Khan, complete with a secretary, on the 11th October, came as a surprise both to my colleagues and myself. The new minister is said to have served as a consul in Bombay and at the Afghan Legation in Paris, but he appears to be somewhat ignorant of diplomatic usage. He speaks English.

Egypt: Awadh-al-Bahrawi Bey, Minister (July 13, 1940).

*Came to Bagdad from the Egyptian Ministry for Foreign Affairs. He was formerly consul at Addis Ababa. He is also minister to Saudi Arabia and created a precedent by presenting his letters of credence at Riyadh by special arrangement. (Written in 1940.)

He has spent little time in Bagdad this year and is said to be a sick man. Immediately after the Rashid Ali rebellion in May (during which period he stayed quietly in his legation), he returned to Cairo on sick leave and has not been in Bagdad since. I have not a high opinion of his ability nor do I think that he is well informed on developments in this country. He is verbose and is far more at home discussing questions of protocol. All important work appears to be done by M. Abdul Monem, the counsellor of the legation, who has been chargé d'affaires during the long periods of absence of the minister.

France: M. Jean Lescuyer, Minister (February 26, 1938).

*M. Lescuyer came from Angora, where for some years he had been counsellor. He is frank and friendly and always ready to exchange information and ideas. (Written in 1939.)

*While he does not strike me as being exceptionally shrewd or able, he has proved himself a conscientious and helpful colleague since the outbreak of war, until the collapse of France came as a sudden and severe blow to him. He has since recovered somewhat and is carrying on his duties as minister for the Vichy Government, though his personal sympathies remain with the Allied cause.

He has an attractive and capable wife, who was Swiss born. They have a son who fought at Dunkirk and a daughter who is nearly grown up. (Written in 1940.)

M. Lescuyer has receded more and more into the background this year. Since the occupation of Syria, there seems little *raison d'être* for a Vichy Legation in Bagdad and M. Lescuyer is now rarely seen. In view of his Anglophil tendencies, M. Lescuyer is from our point of view a reasonably satisfactory choice as Vichy representative. There has naturally been a strong hope that he would throw in his lot with the Free French, but unfortunately he appears for personal reasons to have decided against this course. At the moment of writing the days of the French Legation seem to be numbered, as the Iraqi Government are now considering the withdrawal of their diplomatic representative from Vichy.

Hungary.

The Hungarian Minister, who was also accredited to Iraq but resided at Tehran, was sent away, together with other Axis Ministers, in September of this year and the legation closed.

*Iran, see Persia.**Italy.*

The Italian Legation was closed in June of this year.

Japan.

Mr. Taneki Kumabe was recalled to Tokyo in September 1940. The legation was left in the charge of the first secretary, Mr. Yoshio Sasamoto, an individual of nondescript appearance who makes every effort to be friendly. He speaks Persian, Russian, English and French. He has an attractive Russian Azerbaijani wife, who is reported to hold strong Nazi views.

Mr. Shinro Miyazaki, who is a Christian, arrived in Bagdad as minister in April and presented his letters of credence to the rebel Regent, the Sharif Sharaf. Accompanied by his wife and daughters he was assiduous in his attendance at the British church. He was very active during the May rebellion and is reported to have been the main source of Axis funds. He was recalled by his Government and, after some attempts to delay his departure, left Bagdad on the 4th September. Mr. Sasamoto is again in charge of the legation.

Persia.

Since the departure of M. Noury Esfandiary in July 1940 the legation has been in charge of M. Ismail Mejdî, with the rank of chargé d'affaires *ad interim*. M. Mejdî and his pleasant wife are generally only seen at official functions and seem to spend all their spare time playing bridge. He gives me the impression of being a weak and innocuous colleague, and I should not be prepared to trust him very far. There have been constant reports that the Persian Legation has been used to further Axis activities. If this is so, it is more than likely that M. Mejdî has been tamely carrying out the instructions of his Government. Since the entry of British troops into Persia he has shown a pathetic desire to co-operate with this embassy. I understand that he is under orders to hand over the legation to the first secretary and return to Tehran.

Saudi Arabia.

Since the departure of Sheikh Hamza-al-Ghauth in April 1940 and the return of Sheikh Yusuf Yassin to Riyadh in the autumn of that year the legation has remained in the charge of Saiyid Asad-al-Faqih, who is a pleasant but colourless Syrian. During the May rebellion he is reported to have remained pro-British in sympathy but not to have taken any active part in King Ibn Saud's openly-declared anti-Rashid Ali policy.

He speaks French.

Turkey: M. Cavad Ustun, Minister (September 1939).

*He has served in Vienna and at The Hague. He and his wife are an agreeable couple, but both are congenitally nervous, and it may be said without exaggeration that M. Cavad Ustun is a confirmed hypochondriac. Continued ill-health, whether real or imagined, has not been without its influence on his morale, and he has on several occasions shocked both Iraqis and his colleagues by giving expression to defeatist views. While he may not be fundamentally ill-disposed, I have not found him a helpful colleague in times when robust courage and cheerful confidence are qualities to be desired in the representatives of countries having close relations with ourselves. Nevertheless, he and his wife are at all times very friendly. (Written in 1940.)

Until the Rashid Ali rebellion he is reported to have made some feeble attempts to dissuade the pro-German politicians from taking the course they had planned. When the final break came he busied himself feverishly in efforts to reconcile the two parties to each other and so stave off an armed conflict. He and his wife still suffer from perpetual fear and ill-health. Two months after the collapse of the rebellion he hurried back to Turkey on sick leave, and has not since returned to Bagdad.

United States of America: Mr. Paul Knabenshue, Minister Resident (November 7, 1932).

*It is his first diplomatic post. He came from Beirut, where he had been consul-general. Before that he had served in Jerusalem and Cairo. He likes to talk of the happy times he had at both these places, and of his close personal relations with His Majesty's high commissioners. His father was consul-general at Belfast, and it was there that he met and married his Irish wife.

Mr. Knabenshue seems friendly and ready to pass on any information that has reached him. He strikes me as a reasonably capable and a fair average type, thoroughly well-disposed to Great Britain and well-meaning, but of no great

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discretion or keenness of judgment. He has educated his children in England and professes great faith in British institutions in general. (Written in 1940.)

As the tone of Iraqi policy and propaganda became more and more anti-British in early 1941, Mr. Knabenshue spared no effort to make the pro-Nazi clique see the criminal folly of their ways. When the crisis came, Mr. Knabenshue, without even consulting his Government, threw open the doors of his legation to some 150 British subjects and housed them for the whole of May. During this period he had to endure much petty irritation, and even threats of physical violence, from the rebel authorities and I cannot speak too highly of the courage and patience with which he met these assaults. He is deservedly a very popular figure amongst the British community.

Representatives accredited to Iraq but resident elsewhere.

Belgium: M. Egbert Graeffe, Minister (April 27, 1938).

He is also Belgian Minister at Tehran, where he resides.

He pays periodical visits to Bagdad and always shows a keen desire to co-operate closely with this embassy.

Czechoslovakia.

Czechoslovakia was formerly represented in Iraq by a Czechoslovak Chargé d'Affaires resident at Tehran, but the Czechoslovak Legation at that capital appears to have liquidated itself during this year, although no official notification of this was made either to the Iraqi Government or this embassy.

Denmark: Dr. M. A. E. C. Fensmark, Chargé d'Affaires, (June 17, 1939).

*Resides at Tehran. He struck me as a good and typically friendly Danish type. He is married. (Written in 1939.)

Netherlands: Dr. P. L. C. Visser, Minister (August 7, 1941).

He is Netherlands Minister at Angora, where he resides. He stayed only a week in Bagdad for the purpose of presenting his credentials and gave me to understand that he would not often visit this capital. He is a friendly man and created a most favourable impression both in British and Iraqi circles.

Poland: M. Jan Karszo Siedlewski, Minister (March 27, 1939).

He is also minister at Tehran and Kabul and resides at Tehran.

He has visited Bagdad occasionally during the past year. He seems to be a confused little man, friendly, but weak and gullible. He makes no attempt to look after his nationals, and the greater part of his work in this connexion therefore falls on this embassy.

Sweden: M. Hugo von Heidenstam, Minister (December 11, 1936.)

*He is accredited to Persia also, and spends most of his time at Tehran, making short yearly visits to Bagdad. His mother was Scottish and he speaks good English. A pleasant, talkative man, whose chief interest in Iraq seems to be to secure public works contracts for Swedish firms. He is married. (Written in 1940.)

He visited Bagdad in October this year and gave me to understand that he was to be succeeded as minister by M. Poussette, who was previously counsellor at the Swedish Legation in London.

[E 7960/96/93]

No. 25.

Mr. Eden to Sir S. Cripps (Kuibysher).

(No. 334.)

Sir,

Foreign Office, December 1, 1941.

WHEN the Soviet Ambassador came to see me this afternoon, his Excellency said that the difficulties which had appeared in relation to M. Litvinov's journey made him wonder whether it was not desirable to appoint a Soviet Minister in Bagdad. I remarked that I had heard of this before. The Ambassador laughed and said that the positions were now changed, and he thought that the presence of such a Minister might be of practical utility. I said that in principle I had certainly no objection. I would look into the matter and communicate with him again.

I am, &c.

ANTHONY EDEN.

[E 8023/1/93]

No. 26.

Sir Kinahan Cornwallis to Mr. Eden.—(Received December 5.)

(No. 317.)

Sir,

Bagdad, November 11, 1941.

THE formation of a new Cabinet and the opening of a new session of Parliament mark a stage from which it is convenient to look back and survey the events which have occurred since I wrote my last narrative despatch on the 11th July (No. 165).

2. The Cabinet of Jamil Madfai had then been in office a little over a month and was making slow but not entirely unsatisfactory efforts to clear up the economic and political confusion caused by Rashid Ali's reckless assault on the Anglo-Iraqi alliance.

3. Unfortunately the Prime Minister's energy soon began to flag, and the readiness which he showed to yield to the importunities of those who besought him to spare even some of the most active of pro-Nazi enthusiasts eventually brought about his fall.

4. In July, however, the Government was still fairly active. Propaganda was accumulating rather than losing energy, and though much of it was devoted to praise of Jamil Madfai as the true patriot rather than to condemnation of Rashid Ali and the principles for which he stood, there was still promise of further action to eradicate pro-nazism from the public services.

5. On the 13th July three obscure men were publicly hanged for crimes committed during the rioting of the 1st and 2nd June, and about the same time a number of others were sentenced to terms of imprisonment. The effect was salutary, but these punishments cannot be regarded as a just and adequate liquidation of the deplorable happenings of those two days. Many police and military officers are known to have taken part in the general looting and killing, but few of them were punished, and even where disciplinary action was taken it seldom fitted the crime. The report of the commission set up to enquire into the events of those two days was in the hands of the Madfai Government some time before their resignation, but they took no action against the high officials whose conduct is impugned.

6. During the latter half of July and the early days of August further action was taken against many of the Palestinian and Syrian political fugitives who had for so long infected political life in Iraq with their extreme nationalism and bitter hatred of Great Britain. A large number were repatriated and about thirty were banished to villages in the Kurdish districts, where they are unlikely to find public sympathy for their troublesome agitation. These prophylactic measures were rounded off by the successful arrest of three turbulent tribesmen of the south: Sheikh Abdul Wahid-al-Haj Sikkar, Saiyid Alwan-al-Yasiri and Saiyid Qati-al-Awadi. All three had been most active supporters of Rashid Ali and had continued to exercise a baneful influence even after his flight. The removal of these men brought much relief to the Southern Euphrates area, where endemic disputes among well-armed tribes gave them wide opportunities for dangerous intrigues.

7. In the army a mild purge was carried out, and about eighty officers of all ranks were retired on pensions.

8. By the middle of August, however, the Government's efforts to mop up the big pockets of anti-British elements left behind after the rout of Rashid Ali's main forces began to slacken. The completion of the internment camp at Fao hung fire, and action taken by mutasarrifs against pro-Nazi officials was often reversed by Ministers. The impression thus spread abroad that the Prime Minister favoured appeasement and agitation against ourselves began to revive.

9. At this stage the British march into Persia to some extent diverted public attention from home affairs, and the success with which it was carried out stimulated confidence in Great Britain's position in the war.

10. The Iraqi Government themselves, when informed of our intention to go into Persia to turn out the Germans, promised their support and assistance. They were at first a little anxious about possible political and military reactions on Iraq, but so soon as it was evident that there would be no serious opposition to our columns these anxieties faded away and I heard no more of them. In the Holy Cities, where Persian religious influence is strong, the British entry into Persia and the subsequent abdication of the Shah were both welcomed. The

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Shah's suppression of the age-old pilgrimage to Najaf and Kerbela and his treatment of the ulema in his own country had made him most unpopular with the Shiah priesthood and they rejoiced in his downfall.

11. On the 1st September official notices were published in the press summoning Rashid Ali and all members of his Cabinet, the late Chief of the General Staff and the four Divisional Commanders known as the Golden Square, the former Director of Propaganda and the former Master of Ceremonies in the Palace to surrender themselves for trial. All were charged with offences against the State punishable by death, except Abdul Qadir Gailani, the former Master of Ceremonies, who was merely charged with defamation. Rashid Ali and two of his Ministers were already safely in Turkey and one of the generals vanished, but the remainder were all rounded up by our troops in Persia.

12. Their fate remained under consideration for some time and was not decided until after Jamil Madfai had resigned and had been replaced by Nuri Said. With him it was agreed that all the accused men (together with some other less important political fugitives from this country who had also fallen into our hands) should be interned by His Majesty's Government, that they should be tried *in absentia* in Bagdad, and that after sentence had been passed the Iraqi Government should consider whether or not to ask for some or all of them to be handed over to suffer the punishment prescribed. Arrangements are now being made to remove them to Southern Rhodesia for internment as soon as transport can be made available.

13. Some fugitive Palestinians from Iraq were also captured in Persia. Most of these are being sent back to Palestine, but about half-a-dozen with bad records are to go to Southern Rhodesia. The Mufti is still at large.

14. Soon after the beginning of September the Government's hesitation in dealing with the still persistent pro-Nazi agitators provoked serious differences among members of the Cabinet, and the Minister of Finance, Ibrahim Kemal, resigned. His action was supported by one or two of his colleagues and by many influential people outside the Cabinet who shared his dissatisfaction with the liberty allowed to the large number of Rashid Ali's supporters still left at large and with the absence of any scheme for the reorganisation of the army or the Ministry of Education. Jamil Madfai had in fact shown himself to be too small a man to deal with the exceptional difficulties with which he was faced. It is, however, to his credit that he took office at a time when no other Iraqi appeared willing to shoulder the responsibility, and that throughout the period of his premiership he worked in a spirit of friendship and co-operation with us. I believe that he is sincerely convinced that the future of his country must be closely linked with that of Great Britain, and, although in one or two matters he could not free himself from long-standing prejudices, he was genuinely anxious to fulfil the many requirements of the military and Royal Air Force authorities. Considering how deeply Axis influence had penetrated into the life of Iraq, the co-operation and absence of friction during the past five months have, I think, been remarkable.

15. Jamil Madfai tried without success to find men to bring new strength to the Cabinet, and obviously saw in the circumstances that he would not be able to remain in office much longer. At the Regent's request, however, he agreed to carry on for another month to give His Royal Highness time to find a successor.

16. The Regent did not make much use of this respite, and when I returned to Bagdad on the 16th September, after a short visit to Palestine, I found that His Highness and the principal politicians, though quite willing to air their views on what ought to be done, were waiting expectantly for me to make all the necessary moves to solve the crisis.

17. At my suggestion the Regent got into touch with those who might be able to form a Government, but he found that the likely men were all faced with difficulties which prevented them from undertaking this task. Ibrahim Kemal was from the point of view of efficiency the best candidate, but he has never taken any steps to court the confidence of the public, and he felt that he could not undertake office without the co-operation of Nuri Said. There has been a feud between the two for the last five years, during which they have not spoken to one another, and it was therefore not surprising that Nuri Said should refuse an invitation to serve as Minister of Defence. Ibrahim Kemal accordingly dropped out of the running and there remained only a choice between Nuri Said and a suppliant appeal to Jamil Madfai to remain in office. The Regent was rightly disinclined to take the second of these two alternatives, and so Nuri Said was brought hurriedly from Cairo (where he was the Iraqi Minister) to take part in the political manoeuvres.

18. He arrived on the 5th October and four days later the following Cabinet was appointed:—

Prime Minister and Acting Minister of Defence: Nuri Said.

Minister of Interior and Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs: Salih Jabr.

Minister of Finance: Ali Mumtaz.

Minister of Economics: Abdul Mahdi.

Minister of Justice: Sadiq Bassem.

Minister of Education: Tahsin Ali.

Minister of Communications and Works: Amin Zaki.

Minister of Social Affairs: Jamal Baban.

19. The Cabinet contains three Shiahs, one of whom is the Minister of the Interior. This is the first time that a Shiah has held this position. The Kurds have two representatives, and the Prime Minister, by taking for himself the portfolio of Defence, indicated his intention personally to accept responsibility for bringing about the necessary reform of the army.

20. Both the Regent and Nuri Said consulted me closely throughout the negotiations which took place while the Cabinet was being changed and, before taking office, Nuri gave me encouraging assurances about his policy. He undertook to co-operate fully in carrying out all our military plans in Iraq, to reorganise the army and purge it of pro-nazism, to intern the chief anti-British agitators and to eliminate anti-British teaching from the schools.

21. These points were reaffirmed in the Speech from the Throne at the opening of Parliament on the 1st November, and the Prime Minister has already set his hand to the plough. The Chief of the General Staff has been removed and replaced by a better man. Forty troublesome men have been sent to the internment camp at Fao and a special committee has been set up in the Ministry of Education to review the history text-books in use in the schools. (These books have in the past frequently contained matter intended to cultivate hatred of all British institutions in the Middle East.) Further action on these lines may be hoped for in the near future.

22. The Regent paid an official visit to Kerbela and Najaf between the 16th and 18th October. He was well received and the ulema of the Holy Shrines are reported to have assured him of their full support for his policy of close alliance and friendship with Great Britain. This visit, coupled with the appointment of a Shiah Minister of the Interior, which I have mentioned above, has caused some discontent among the Sunnis, who fear the loss of the predominant position hitherto enjoyed by their sect. Those who are hostile to British influence have been quick to allege that the Shiahs owe their improved political position to the British and to make this allegation an argument for supporting Rashid Ali and his Nazi friends. This line of propaganda has not yet made much headway, but it needs to be watched.

23. Two royal visitors arrived in October: the Amir Zaid from Turkey, on the 13th October, and the Amir Abdullah from Amman, on the 25th October. The Amir Abdullah's visit was attended by full ceremonial, both in Bagdad and Basra, and the talks which His Highness had with a very large number of people undoubtedly have done good. He was outspoken in his condemnation of the Rashid Ali régime and in his belief in the advantages to the Arabs of friendship and alliance with Great Britain; so far as is known, he studiously refrained from pressing any claim to the throne of Syria. He returned to Amman on the 6th November with an enhanced reputation amongst the moderate elements. The Amir Zaid is living quietly in his own house and is expected to remain in Bagdad for some time.

24. A serious situation was threatened in the Sinjar early in September. The Quaimmaqam went out with some police to stop a fight between two villages and was accidentally killed by a stray bullet. Difficulties with the Yezidis of the Sinjar had begun in June with the return from a prolonged absence in Syria of a troublesome chieftain named Daud-i-Daud. Afraid lest past misdeeds might still be remembered against him he omitted to pay his respects to the local authorities, who in consequence were disposed to regard him as a potential rebel. The difficulty was overcome by the intervention of the Adviser to the Ministry of the Interior, but the Quaimmaqam of the Sinjar then embarked on a policy of provocation while the Mutasarrif of Mosul, whose dislike of the Yezidis is notorious, pressed the Central Government to repress vigorously the unrest to which the Quaimmaqam's conduct led. Consequently when the Quaimmaqam was killed the Mutasarrif made the most of his opportunity to demand the exemplary

punishment of the whole area. Iraqi troops were hurried to the spot and it seemed possible that the Government would embark on a general punitive expedition of the kind which had more than once disgraced their handling of the Yezidis in the past. I hastened to urge calm and moderation, and my efforts were supported by the Adviser to the Ministry of the Interior, who persuaded the Minister to resist the Mutasarrif's demand and personally to visit Mosul to bring about a reasonable settlement. Thanks to the efforts of the adviser, who went with the Minister to Mosul, the leading Yezidi chieftains came in to Mosul to make their submission. The section responsible for the skirmish in which the Qaimmaqam was killed paid a fine of 1,000 dinars and undertook to surrender the men responsible for firing on the Qaimmaqam. After this settlement most of the Iraqi troops were withdrawn from the Sinjar but some remained at the Qadha headquarters and in the middle of October nearly caused a grave incident by carrying out night operations in the neighbourhood of a village without giving warning of their intentions. Troops in the Sinjar are unnecessary and provocative, and I have pressed the Government to have them withdrawn.

25. Another constant cause of trouble in the Sinjar is the Yezidi feud with the Shammar Jarba. Not only does this lead to raids and counter-raids between the two people but it also results in incessant intrigues by the Shammar with the Iraqi officials against the Yezidis. An exceptionally good Mutasarrif is needed in Mosul to deal with these difficulties. Tahsin Ali's anti-Yezidi and pro-Shammar bias was unfortunate. Tahsin Ali has now joined Nuri Said's Cabinet and everything possible must be done to find a fair-minded and competent successor.

26. One of the most difficult problems which the Iraqi Government has now to face is that of the steadily increasing cost of living. The extent to which prices have risen recently is shown by the examples given below:—

Retail Prices.

	Prices in August 1941.	Prices in November 1941.
Flour	60 fils per hugga (9 lbs.)	80 fils per hugga.
Local bread	16 fils per waqiya (kilo)...	28 fils per waqiya.
European bread (rolls)	2½ fils each	4 fils each.
Meat	40 fils per waqiya	48 fils per waqiya.
Ghee	640 fils per hugga	740 fils per hugga.
Sugar	40 fils per kilo	72 fils per kilo.
Matches	40 fils per dozen	60 fils per dozen.
Calico (unbleached)	16 fils per dera (½ yd.)	36 fils per dera.
Calico (bleached)	24 fils per dera	50 fils per dera.
Cotton flannel	25 fils per dera	50 fils per dera.
Kerosene	116 fils per tin	128 fils per tin.
Salt	20 fils per charak (13 lbs.)	40 fils per charak.
Limes	8 fils per waqiya	12 fils per waqiya.

To understand the full hardship of war prices, it is necessary, however, to make a comparison between the prices of 1939 and those of the present day. Ghee in 1939 was only 240-280 fils a hugga; meat 28-30 fils a waqiya; sugar 16-18 fils a hugga; and matches only 16 fils a dozen. This rise in prices has caused much hardship to the poorer classes and serious discontent may result unless means are found to reduce the cost of such essential articles as tea, sugar, flour and cloth. Nuri Said's Cabinet are not neglecting this question and already measures have been taken which are having a beneficial effect. These measures include the announcement of the purchase of large quantities of wheat, sugar, tea, coffee and textiles from India, and I have been asked to help the Iraqi Government to find shipping for these necessary supplies.

27. Throughout their period of office I maintained constant pressure on the Madfai Government to prevent foreign diplomatic missions in this country from being used for Axis activities. Cypher facilities were withdrawn from the Japanese Legation on the 27th August and, after much procrastination, the Japanese Minister was persuaded to leave early in September. The last of the Japanese community followed him shortly afterwards, and apart from a small legation staff there are now no Japanese in Iraq. Cypher facilities were withdrawn from the Vichy French Legation on the 17th August, and since Nuri Said's Government came into office ways and means of persuading both the French and Japanese Governments to withdraw their legations have been under consideration.

28. Nuri Said had the idea they might be persuaded to do this if he published a statement making it clear that their diplomatic missions were no longer welcome. He accordingly gave an interview to Reuters (published on the 29th October), in the course of which he referred to the reprehensible conduct last

May of two Governments with legations in Bagdad, one of which provided arms to the rebel Government and allowed Axis aeroplanes to use territory under its control, while the other financed the rebellion with Axis money. The Vichy and Japanese Governments cannot have failed to see where the cap fitted, but up to the present they do not appear to have decided what, if any, action to take to meet this statement.

29. Relations with Saudi Arabia have been passing through one of their periodic phases of difficulty. The Shammar of Najd, who were sent back across the border in 1940 in accordance with the understandings reached at Raudha-al-Tanha in April of that year, have evaded the Saudi authorities and found their way back to Iraq. King Abdul Aziz is demanding that they should be expelled again, but the Iraqi Government are slow to do this, because they feel that it was the Saudi Government's business to have kept them in Saudi territory if they did not wish them to break away back into Iraq. The unsettled question of the demarcation of the frontier at Judaidat-al-Arar also remains a cause of friction.

30. I have spoken to the Prime Minister of the importance of preserving good relations with Saudi Arabia, and I hope that the Iraqi Government, with the help of the Adviser to the Ministry of the Interior, will soon be able to put forward practical and conciliatory proposals for a further attempt to settle these and other outstanding differences.

31. One of the basic causes of trouble with Saudi Arabia is that, whereas King Abdul Aziz is always intensely interested in desert politics, the Iraqi Government persistently neglect their Bedouin tribes and are only awakened to activity when a crisis occurs. So soon as this has passed they relapse into indifference, leaving the desert people to their own ways until the next crisis makes a further demand for official action.

32. After the British and Free French forces had completed the occupation of the French Mandated Territories in the Levant, the Iraqi Government began to show renewed interest in the future of these territories, and especially in the establishment of the independence of Syria. At the end of July the Minister for Foreign Affairs addressed an official communication to me in which, after recalling the undertakings given by His Majesty's Government concerning the independence of that country and the long struggle of the Syrian people for liberty, he urged that His Majesty's Government should themselves supervise the procedure by which satisfaction would be given to Syria's national aspirations through the creation of a genuine national Government. The Iraqi Government also endeavoured to persuade King Abdul Aziz-al-Saud to join them in making representations to His Majesty's Government with a view to hastening the establishment of Syrian independence. King Abdul Aziz did not agree to this proposal, but counselled patience and confidence in the pledges already given on this subject.

33. Shortly afterwards an inspired press campaign was opened, the main themes of which were the hopelessness of expecting anything from the Free French and the duty of Great Britain to right Syria's wrongs. I told the Minister for Foreign Affairs that such articles were embarrassing to us and were playing straight into the hands of the Germans. The campaign was then stopped, but rumours and suspicions remained unabated until, on the 27th September, General Catroux announced the formation of an independent Syrian Republic, with Shaikh Taj-ud-Din as President.

34. In spite of the lead given by the Egyptian Government, the Iraqi Government have deliberately refrained from recognising the new republic. Nuri Said and his colleagues are, of course, willing to recognise Syrian independence, but maintain that they cannot recognise as President of a Syrian Republic a man who has been appointed without any reference to the wishes of the people.

35. I should like, in conclusion, to refer briefly to the work of the political advisers. You will recall that towards the end of last June you approved proposals which I submitted to you for the appointment of political advisers to work under my direction with a view to enabling me to combat enemy activities by keeping in close touch with the tribes and of obtaining reliable information of political developments throughout the country. There are now two political advisers (with the rank of lieutenant-colonel), one for the North and one for the South, each with two assistant political advisers with the rank of major. They all tour constantly and maintain close and friendly relations, not only with the big tribal chiefs, but also with important notables in the towns and with the principal Iraqi officials, who, having known most of them of old as colleagues, welcome their collaboration and advice. Through the information which they send to me I am kept well informed of all that takes place, and I am thus in a position to take steps

with the Government departments concerned to check maladministration and to counter the activities of subversive elements. The political advisers have also been able to give valuable help to the British military authorities in their dealings with the local Iraqi officials and have, in addition, maintained useful liaison with officers engaged in similar work both in Syria and Persia. This organisation works in close co-operation with my public relations department, which has itself been expanded and strengthened, and I am satisfied that, together, they are a powerful influence for good in combating enemy propaganda and strengthening our own position in all parts of this country.

36. I am sending copies of this despatch to His Majesty's representatives at Angora, Cairo, Tehran and Jedda, the Minister of State, Cairo, His Majesty's High Commissioner for Jerusalem and Transjordan, the Governor-General of India, the Commander-in-Chief, India, General Headquarters, Middle East, the Political Resident in the Persian Gulf, the Political Agent, Koweit, and to His Majesty's Consuls at Basra and Mosul.

I have, &c.

KINAHAN CORNWALLIS.

CHAPTER II.—SYRIA AND THE LEBANON.

[E 2840/34/89]

No. 27.

Consul Gardener to Mr. Eden.—(Received June 6.)

(No. 11.)

Sir,

Damascus, April 10, 1941.

I HAVE the honour to report that, as a result of the strike and of the manner of its settlement, the Nationalists have suffered some loss of prestige. Its leaders also do not inspire confidence in Syria, lacking the prestige of Hashem-al-Atassi, the cunning opportunism of Jamil Mardam and the mass appeal of Fakhri Baroudi. The remaining leader, being an unimaginative and rather unintelligent fanatic, lacks in popular appeal.

2. The Shahbandar party, although its principles made a considerable appeal to a great part of the Syrian population, suffers from many drawbacks—the chief being its lack of effective leadership and organisation.

3. Probably on account of the bankruptcy of the two leading parties, and certainly symptomatic of the state of political unrest and dissatisfaction caused by the absence of a strong internal lead by the French and by the unstable nature of world events, is the appearance of a flock of minor political parties. Some of them are old parties revived, while others are new creations.

4. It is possible that the Axis, although willing to use Shukri Quwatli and the Nationalists for their purposes up to a given point, have realised that he is not entirely suitable for their larger aims and will, when the critical moment comes, utilise other movements and organisations to attain their political ends in Syria, either in conjunction with or apart from the Nationalists. Such a possibility exists in the shape of the minor political parties of a "youth" nature. Most of them have an inclination towards the Axis mainly because for the Syrians "democracy" means "French" and because of the anti-British feeling arising from the Palestine disturbances and of British association with Turkey, who is credited with designs on Northern Syria and Iraq.

5. If the Axis could so far allay Syrian jealousy and suspicions as to produce a really great national figure-head, it is possible that these minor parties (which need further organisation and membership) might be induced to amalgamate to form one body to achieve their national aspirations under German protection.

6. In view of their potential importance, I have the honour to enclose an appendix giving as much information as I have been able to collect on these parties.

I am sending copies of this despatch to His Majesty's representatives at Cairo (with original tracts), Bagdad, Jerusalem and Beirut.

I have, &c.

A. J. GARDENER.

Appendix.

Usbat-el-Amal-al-Qaumi.—Founded about 1933 by the lawyer Abdur Razzaq Dandashi to oppose the Nationalists. Since his death, the party ceased to be important, though it still has a considerable influence over youth. When Dr. Shahbandar arrived back in Syria, the party joined him, but, soon after, it transferred its allegiance to the Nationalists. It is in intimate relations with Iraq and with Iraqi consular officers, which leads to the supposition that its real head is the ex-Mufti. The party in Syria is also in the closest relationship with the Nationalists, so much so that the two parties may be regarded as identical. Its most prominent members are Fahmi-el-Mahairi (Secretary-General in Syria), Shafiq Suleiman, Abul Huda-el-Yafi, Abdul Karim-el-Aidi (all three in Iraq), Rushdi-el-Jabi (Amman), Munir-el-Aita, Orfan-el-Jallad, Aref Ghamian, Fuad-el-Yoghn, Badreddine Safadi, Mazhar Katana, Mohamed-el-Jeroudi, Zeki-el-Jabi, Osman-el-Aloussi, Rouda-el-Admeh.

In Beirut the party is represented by Ali Nasreddin and Fuad Nahadi, and in the Bekaa by Nazem Qadri. In Aleppo the party is stated to have no influence.

As a result of disputes, the following former members have withdrawn: Mazhar-el-Quwatli (cousin of Shukri), Zeki-el-Arsouzi, Jamil-el-Jabi, Abdul Qadir Midani, Ahmed-al-Shehabi (of Amman).

In any case, this party is very fluid without a proper constitution or central organisation. Everyone uses it for his individual aims.

An Nadi-el-Arabi.—This party was, at the time of its formation, the best organised and very resourceful. It is notoriously of German inspiration and is organised on the Nazi model ("Führerprinzip"). Its president, Dr. Said Fettah-el-Imam, made several trips by air to Germany in 1938-39.

At the outbreak of the war the majority of its leading members fled abroad (principally to Iraq, which afforded them a refuge and perhaps a field of operations). After the French armistice, the Nadi tried to reorganise itself and resume operations in Syria. Its vice-president, Izzat-al-Chourbagi, sought to obtain authority from the French to open a "sporting" club, but was refused. The next manoeuvre was to attempt to infiltrate into the Syrian Scout movement, but this was only partly successful.

The most prominent members of the party at Damascus are Izzat Chourbagi, Zuhair and Faiz Dalati, Toufiq-es-Sawwaf, Ata Makki, Kamal-el-Daqqaq, Anwar Tillo, Zeki-el-Naal, Abdul Majid Trabulsi, Nasouh Dakkak, Ahmed Shehawi, Riad-el-Inglisi.

The Nadi has supported the Nationalists openly since its formation in 1936. It is reported from Iraq that Jamil Mardam is in close personal contact with its former president (Dr. Said Fettah-al-Imam), who is reported to have accompanied Mardam to the Hejaz.

The Nadi-al-Arabi can still be counted as a close supporter of the Nationalists, but it is considered it would obey Axis commands even against the Nationalists.

Shabab Muhammed.—This organisation was formed by the students of the Lycée-al-Tajhiz as a result of the religious controversies between the two divinity professors, Es Sabouni and At Tantawi, and had reactionary religious tendencies. Its leader is an Aleppo lawyer, Abdul Wahhab-el-Azrak.

In the religious sphere it acts as a counterpoise between the two religious parties, "Jamiat-al-Sharia" (presided over by Sheikh Ali-al-Dakr) and the "Jamiat-al-Ulema" (presided over by Sheikh Kamel-al-Qassab), sometimes siding with the one and sometimes with the other. Each religious side thinks it controls the Shabab. On the political side, the personal relations of its leader, Abdul Wahab-el-Azrak, bring it in on the side of the Nationalists, under whom he held a minor office in 1938-39. He is an intriguer and an ambitious character, hoping again for office.

Al Inqaz.—This party was formed recently as a result of the split by Mazhar Quwatli with the Ushat-el-Amal-al-Qaumi. Not much information is available as to its size and politics except that it supported the Nationalists in the recent strike.

Its leader is not credited with the qualities of a great leader.

Al Kashaf-al-Souri.—The political activities of this Syrian scout movement have recommenced by the infiltration of members of the Nadi-al-Arabi (*q.v.*).

Its principal leaders are Zuhair and Faiz-ed-Dalati and Abdul Karim Dandashi.

Syrian Communist Party.—At the beginning of the strike, the Communist party showed its hand by the distribution of a tract (No. 1). Its subsequent activities are unknown except that it appears to have been interested only in the economic side of the strike.

In view of the repressive action taken against it by the French, its leaders Khalid Bagdash, Rafiq Rouda and Fauzi-el-Zaim disappeared from sight, though the former is supposed to be in Baghdad. It is reputed to have a membership of some 600, including a few women. Its present activity is confined to the distribution of a journal reproduced by gelatine.

Its leaders, especially Khalid Bagdash, have always been on good terms with the *bloc* and supported that party (even when it was out of power) in its journal.

Nadi-el-Zaama.—Of this recently-formed party little information is available. It is reputed to have been started and to be guided by Izzat Darwazah (? at the instigation of the ex-Mufti) with Shakir-el-Aas, Mohamed Hejaz and Dr. Subhi Abu Ghanimeh.

Al Ihia'a-al-Arabi.—This may be the same as (or another facet of) the Nadi-el-Zaama (*q.v.*). The leaders are Shaker-el-Aas, Salah Bitar, Michel Afla, Dr. Id, Kamal Ayad and Adnan-el-Atassi. Some of these men have German wives, some were educated in Germany and one has a German mistress. In these circumstances it is not surprising that the party is entirely Germanophil. It is stated that the favourite candidate for the presidency is Nassouh Bukhari who has received the official blessing of the Germans. It is possible that this party

may be the central organisation destined by the Germans to be the rallying-point for the other "youth" organisations. Unfortunately, little is known of the party or of its activities except that authorship of the two pamphlets Nos. 2 and 3 distributed in the recent strike are ascribed to it.

Haras-al-Arabi.—This is the name given to a very shadowy party which is certainly organised by Haj Amin. It may be identical or linked with the Nadi-el-Zaama and the Ihia'a-al-Arabi. Specimens of the enrolment form of the Haras-el-Arabi have been seen. They are signed by Haj Amin as the "leader" of the Near East and provide for the organisation of the party on complete Nazi lines. The main overt activity of the party has been to stencil its name on walls, &c. The display of Nazi flags during the strike is ascribed to this party.

Hizb-as-Suri-al-Qaumi.—This party was founded about 1930 by Antoun Saadeh, a Syrian from South America. At first it was opposed to the Nationalist *bloc* aiming at getting into power on its own. Gradually its policy became more and more pro-German, until at the outbreak of war the French took severe repressive measures against it and the party virtually ceased to exist. Its leader Antoun Saadeh fled—some say to Germany.

Since the French collapse the party has shown renewed signs of life, and as the Nationalist party became more and more closely associated with the Axis so the Hizb-as-Suri gave it more and more support. The party has no well-known leaders, and is said to number 25,000 in Syria and the Lebanon (there are said to be 14,000 in Beirut alone).

The party sided with the Nationalists in the recent strike, but produced Circular No. 4 appended, (1) which will be seen to be purely Nazi.

Al Ahd-as-Suri.—This is the name of the party which Amir Said-al-Jazairi tried to found on Shahbandar lines. It included Mustafa Showkat, Ruda-es-Sabban, Sherif-el-Hajjar, Sheikh Ruda-el-Attar. After the first few preliminary meetings the movement seems to have dissolved as it accused the Amir of being too arbitrary.

Al Ittihad-al-Arabi.—This is a party in process of formation. Its leader is Zeki-el-Arsouzi, a former member of the Ushat-el-Amal-al-Qaumi, and the Arab leader who was mainly responsible for rallying Arab opinion over the sanjak question.

He is an ardent pan-Arab and will found his party on this principle. He is a man of some personality and will probably have considerable influence over "youth." He is regarded with great suspicion by the French on account of his advanced political ideas.

Hizb-al-Arabi-al-Qaumi.—This is another party in course of formation whose programme has been seen. Very little is known about the party except that its programme contains the usual wild and impractical ideas of pan-Arabism. It has been said that this party is the one which the Germans are trying to promote.

Miscellaneous.—The above are the largest minor parties. There are many others of no real importance as the Syrian is a born politician. In dealing with movements connected with the scholastic centres it is, however, useful to note that there is a line of demarcation between the students of the university and those of the lycée.

(1) Not printed.

[E 2915/62/89]

No. 28.

Sir M. Lampson to Mr. Eden.—(Received June 8.)

(No. 1756.)

(Telegraphic.) *En clair.*

Cairo, June 8, 1941.

YOUR telegram No. 1931.

Following is French text:—

"Proclamation du Général Catroux faite au nom du Général de Gaulle, chef des Français Libres.

"Syriens et Libanais. A l'heure où les forces de la France Libre unies aux forces de l'Empire Britannique, son Alliée, pénètrent sur votre territoire, je déclare assumer les pouvoirs, les responsabilités et les devoirs du représentant de la France au Levant. Ceci au nom de la France Libre, qui s'identifie avec la France traditionnelle et authentique, et au nom de son chef, le Général de Gaulle. En cette qualité je viens mettre un terme au

régime du mandat et vous proclamer libres et indépendants. Vous serez donc désormais des peuples souverains et indépendants et vous pourrez soit vous constituer en États distincts soit vous rassembler en un seul État. Dans les deux hypothèses votre statut d'indépendance et de souveraineté sera garanti par un traité où seront en outre définis nos rapports réciproques. Ce traité sera négocié dès que possible entre vos représentants et moi. En attendant sa conclusion notre situation mutuelle sera celle d'alliés étroitement unies dans la poursuite d'un idéal et de buts communs. Syriens et Libanais. Vous jugerez par cette déclaration que si les forces Françaises Libres et les forces Britanniques franchissent vos frontières ce n'est pas pour opprimer votre liberté, c'est pour l'assurer. C'est pour chasser de la Syrie les forces d'Hitler. C'est pour empêcher que le Levant devienne contre les Britanniques et contre nous une base offensive de l'ennemi. Nous ne pouvons permettre, nous qui combattons pour la liberté des peuples, que, submergeant peu à peu votre pays, les ennemis puissent s'emparer de vos personnes et de vos biens et faire de vous des esclaves. Nous ne permettrons pas que des populations que la France a promis de défendre soient jetées entre les mains du maître le plus impitoyable que l'histoire ait connu. Nous ne permettrons pas que les intérêts séculaires de la France au Levant soient livrés à l'ennemi. Syriens et Libanais. Si, répondant à mon appel, vous vous ralliez à nous, vous devez savoir que le Gouvernement Britannique d'accord avec la France Libre s'est engagé à vous consentir tous les avantages dont jouissent les pays libres qui leur sont associés. C'est ainsi que le blocus sera levé et que vous entrerez sur-le-champ en relations avec le bloc de la livre sterling, ce qui ouvrira les plus larges possibilités à votre commerce d'importation et d'exportation. Vos achats et vos ventes avec tous les pays libres se feront librement. Syriens et Libanais. La France vous déclare indépendants par la voix de ceux de ses fils qui combattent pour sa vie et pour la liberté du monde."

[E 4169/62/89]

No. 2.

*Declaration by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom.—
(Communicated by His Majesty's Embassy, Cairo.)*

GENERAL CATROUX, on behalf of General de Gaulle, Chief of the Free French, has issued a declaration to the inhabitants of Syria and the Lebanon before advancing with the object of expelling the Germans. In this he declares the liberty and independence of Syria and the Lebanon. He undertakes to negotiate a treaty to ensure these objects.

I am authorised by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom to declare that they support and associate themselves with the assurance of independence given by General Catroux on behalf of General de Gaulle to Syria and the Lebanon.

I am also authorised to give you the assurance that, should you support and join the Allies, His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom offer you all the advantages enjoyed by free countries who are associated with them. Thus the blockade will be lifted and you will enter into immediate relations with the sterling bloc, which will give you enormous and immediate advantages from the point of view of your exports and imports. You will be able to sell your products and to buy freely in all free countries.

MILES LAMPSON,

*His Britannic Majesty's Ambassador, Cairo,
on behalf of His Majesty's Government in
the United Kingdom.*

Cairo, June 8, 1941.

[E 3022/34/89]

No. 29.

Consul-General Havard to Mr. Eden.—(Received June 12.)

(No. 36.)

Sir,

Aley (Beirut), April 18, 1941.

WITH reference to my telegram No. 88 of the 6th April, in which I reported the end of the disturbances in Beirut and the projected formation of a Lebanese Government on new lines, together with the elaboration of a statute somewhat similar to that recently granted to Syria, I have the honour to state that M. Alfred Naccache, after his appointment as head of the Government on the 9th April (my telegram No. 94 of the 10th April), was able on the following day to form his Government, consisting of the four following Under-Secretaries of State:—

- (1) *Ahmed Daouk* (Sunni Moslem): Vice-President of the Council and Under-Secretary of State for the Departments of Public Works and Posts and Telegraphs.
- (2) *Joseph Naggear* (Greek Catholic): Under-Secretary for Finance and Food Supply and Control.
- (3) *Philippe Boudos* (Greek Orthodox): Under-Secretary of State for National Education and Youth.
- (4) *Fuad Ousseirane* (Shia' Moslem): Under-Secretary of State for National Economy and Public Health.

M. Naccache himself retains the post of Under-Secretary of State for the Interior.

2. M. Naccache, who is himself a Maronite by religion, has followed the time-honoured custom of choosing his collaborators from each of the leading religious denominations of the Lebanon, with the exception of the Druses, an omission which has caused some heart-burning amongst that sect. The Government, moreover, is to be assisted by a Council of State—yet to be nominated—whose duty it will be to elaborate laws. There is also to be an Advisory Council (Conseil consultatif) composed of the leading political, cultural and economic elements in the country.

3. I beg to enclose herewith copies⁽¹⁾ of Decrees Nos. 80/LR and 81/LR of the 9th April, which deal with the new statute and with the appointment of the head of the State. It will be seen that article 6 of Decree No. 80/LR abrogates articles 3, 4 and 5 of Decree No. 246/LR of the 21st September, 1939, which, as reported in my telegram No. 47 of the 22nd September, 1939, made certain provisional amendments to the Lebanese Constitution.

4. As I had the honour to report in my telegram No. 87 of the 5th April, the High Commissioner invited President Eddé and his Secretary of State to resign their offices and thus make way for the formation of the new Government. This radical change and the rumours that the Lebanon was no longer to be governed by cliques and clans was welcomed by all classes of the population, who had become heartily sick of the type of politician who had usurped the high positions in the State during the last few years.

5. Short biographies of the members of the new Government form another enclosure to this despatch.⁽¹⁾ M. Alfred Naccache is a young man who enjoys universal popularity and has an unsullied reputation. As president of the Court of Appeal he has shown himself to be an honest and conscientious judge, and no criticism of his appointment has been heard. It is true that neither he nor any of his collaborators have had previous experience of Government administration, and would appear, as a team, to lack drive, yet they all come to the task with untarnished reputations. Their principal labours will doubtless be confined to tasks of a domestic nature. The majority of the inhabitants of the Lebanon are poor. The war and the blockade have hit the poorer classes badly, and have deprived many of their means of livelihood. The supply and distribution of food will be the first problem to receive the new Ministry's attention. Scarcity of supply, caused by lack of transport and unwillingness to sell, has caused a large rise in prices, and Lebanese commercial instinct has led to hoarding and cornering. M. Naccache and his collaborators have a difficult though not impossible task ahead of them.

6. I am sending copies of this despatch and enclosures to His Majesty's representatives at Cairo, Jerusalem, Damascus and Aleppo.

I have, &c.

G. T. HAVARD.

⁽¹⁾ Not printed.

Extract from House of Commons Debates (July 15, 1941).

Mr. Lees-Smith: May I ask the Prime Minister whether he has any information to give the House with regard to the Russian agreement?

The Prime Minister: Towards the end of last week it became possible to make a solemn agreement between the British and Russian Governments, carrying with it the full assent of the British and Russian people and all the great Dominions of the Crown, for united action against the common foe. Both the British and Russian Governments have undertaken to continue the war against Hitlerite Germany to the utmost of their strength, to help each other as much as possible in every way and not to make peace separately. My right hon. friend the Foreign Secretary and the right hon. Member for East Bristol (Sir Stafford Cripps), our ambassador in Moscow, were indefatigable in carrying matters to a swift conclusion. The agreement which has been signed, the text of which has been published, cannot fail to exercise a highly beneficial and potent influence on the future of the war. It is, of course, an alliance, and the Russian people are now our allies. General Smuts has, with his usual commanding wisdom, made a comment which, as it entirely represents the view of His Majesty's Government, I should like to repeat now. He says:—

"Let no one say that we are now in league with Communists and are fighting the battle of communism. More fitly can neutralists and fence sitters be charged with fighting the battle of nazism. If Hitler, in his insane megalomania, has driven Russia to fighting in self-defence, we bless her arms and wish her all success, without for a moment identifying ourselves with her communistic creed. Hitler has made her his enemy and not us friendly to her creed, just as previously he treacherously made her his friend without embracing her communism."

My right hon. friend the Foreign Secretary, in these busy days, has also been instrumental in bringing about a very great measure of agreement between the Russian Soviet State and the Polish Republic. These negotiations have not yet reached their conclusion, but I am very hopeful that, aided by the statesmanship of General Sikorski, another important step will soon be taken in the marshalling of all the peoples of the world against the criminals who have darkened its life and menaced its future.

The House will also have read, I have no doubt, the good news from Syria. A military convention has been signed, in a cordial spirit on both sides, putting an end to a period of fratricidal strife between Frenchmen and Frenchmen, and also between Frenchmen and British, Australian and Indian soldiers, all of whom drew the sword of their own free will in defence of the soil of France. The fact that our relations, such as they are, with the Vichy Government have not been worsened during these weeks of distressing fighting, when the forces on both sides acquitted themselves with so much discipline, skill and gallantry, is a proof of the deep comprehension of the French people of the true issues at stake in the world. It is a manifestation of that same spirit which leads them to wave encouragement to our bombing aircraft, although the bombs have, in the hard fortune of war, to be cast on French territory because it is in enemy hands.

We seek no British advantage in Syria. Our only object in occupying the country has been to beat the Germans and help to win the war. We rejoice that with the aid of the forces of General de Gaulle, led by General Catroux and General Legentilhomme, we have been able to bring to the peoples of Syria and the Lebanon the restoration of their full sovereign independence. We have liberated the country from the thralldom exercised by the German Armistice Commission at Wiesbaden, and from the dangerous German intrigues and infiltration which were in progress. The historic interests of France in Syria, and the primacy of those interests over the interests of other European nations, are preserved without prejudice to the rights and sovereignty of the Syrian races.

The conclusion of this brief Syrian campaign reflects credit upon all responsible—upon General Wavell, who was able to spare the forces first to put down the revolt in Iraq, and afterwards to act in Syria, while at the same time making vigorous head against the German and Italian army and its strong armoured elements which have for so many months been attempting unsuccessfully to invade the Nile Valley. The actual conduct of the campaign was in the hands of General Sir Maitland Wilson, who, it will be remembered, was the general who

extricated our forces from the very great dangers by which they were encompassed in Greece. He did not tell us much about what was going on in either case, but in both cases his operations constitute an admirable example of military skill. I hope it will soon be possible to give fuller accounts to the public than they have yet received of the Syrian fighting, marked as it was by so many picturesque episodes, such as the arrival of His Majesty's Lifeguards and Royal Horse Guards, and the Essex Yeomanry, in armoured cars, across many hundreds of miles of desert, to surround and capture the oasis of Palmyra. There are many episodes of that kind, of great interest, which I trust may soon be made public.

We are entitled to say that the situation in the Nile Valley has for the time being, at any rate, been considerably improved. If anyone had predicted two months ago, when Iraq was in revolt and our people were hanging on by their eyelids at Habbaniyah, and our ambassador was imprisoned in his embassy at Bagdad, and when all Syria and Iraq began to be overrun by German tourists, and were in the hands of forces controlled indirectly but none the less powerfully by German authority—if anyone had predicted that we should already, by the middle of July, have cleaned up the whole of the Levant and have re-established our authority there for the time being, such a prophet would have been considered most imprudent. The heavy and indecisive fighting at Sollum by our desert army, and the stubborn defence of Crete in which such heavy losses were inflicted on the enemy's air power, must be judged to have played their part in arriving at the general result.

Mr. Lees-Smith: May I ask the Prime Minister when the Government expect to be able to let us know the terms of the agreement with regard to Syria?

The Prime Minister: I had hoped to include them in my statement to-day, but they have not yet been released in their final form. There are, I believe, some minor amendments which have been agreed upon, but in substance they are entirely satisfactory to His Majesty's Government.

Sir Irving Albery: I wish to put a question arising out of the right hon. gentleman's reference to the right hon. and learned gentleman the Member for East Bristol (Sir S. Cripps), who is a member of this House and has gone abroad on duties which are, naturally, important, under the certificate of the right hon. gentleman. Other right hon. gentlemen have also gone abroad to other parts of the world in similar circumstances. I desire to ask the Prime Minister whether, when these right hon. gentlemen return on visits to this country, they are to be considered as completely banished from this House, or whether they will take the opportunity, on such occasions, of making statements from their places here to the House of Commons?

The Prime Minister: They are by no means banished from the House. They have their full rights as Members of Parliament, but those rights are usually exercised in relation to the particular official functions which members are, from time to time, called upon to discharge.

Sir I. Albery: This matter is one of some importance. Take the case of the right hon. gentleman who has recently gone out to the East. He may return to this country from time to time. When he returns the House of Commons may desire an opportunity of hearing from him any information which he may be able to give regarding his important function in the East, and I should like to ask the right hon. gentleman whether he intends to allow that?

The Prime Minister: He has only just gone out there, and so the case is not likely to arise for some time, but the Minister of State is a Minister of the Crown, and is therefore just as much entitled to speak on behalf of the Government in this House as any of us here.

Mr. Eden to Mr. Stonehewer-Bird (Jedda).

(No. 45.)
Sir,

Foreign Office, August 15, 1941.

THE Saudi Arabian Minister called to see me this morning, when we had some general discussion on Arabian affairs. Sheikh Hafiz said that he felt some anxiety about the situation in Syria. The same French officials were still in authority there. Yesterday it had been the Vichy French, now it was the Free

French, but the individuals were the same, and the people were not happy under them. The truth was that the late French Administration had been most unpopular. It was important that the Free French rule should show itself to be different from Vichy rule. I would understand that the true confidence of the Arab was reposed in the British, not in the French, whether they were Vichy or Free French. The Arabs recalled the statement I had made in my Mansion House speech, and it was in this that their confidence rested.

2. Sheikh Hafiz said that, if he might make a suggestion, he thought that General de Gaulle would much improve his position with the Arabs if in his speeches he would not always and exclusively speak of France in the Levant. He should mention the Arabs, too. He could make it plain that he understood that the inhabitants of Syria had not been happy in the last twenty years, and that now a new era was opening up during which they would live together, French and Arabs, as friends.

3. I thanked the sheikh for his advice, and said that I fully understood its wisdom. At the same time, our position in Syria was a delicate one. The military command was British, the civil administration was French. The French probably understood that we were more popular than they, and much tact was needed on our part to bring about the state of affairs which we all wished to see. I felt sure that General de Gaulle wished to realise the ideal of Syrian independence. He was, however, handicapped in this by his desire not to appear in French eyes to be ceding French rights. While watching Syria, he had to watch Vichy, too. Sheikh Hafiz said that he understood this, but that, unless the inhabitants of Syria were taken into General de Gaulle's confidence and treated as friends, the situation could hardly improve, and all Arabs were watching developments in Syria.

I am, &c.

ANTHONY EDEN.

[E 5265/62/89]

No. 32.

Exchange of Letters between the Minister of State and General de Gaulle concerning the Interpretation to be placed by the British and Free French Authorities upon the Syrian Armistice Convention.

(1)

Minister of State to General de Gaulle.

My dear General,

Cairo, July 24, 1941.

I SEND you herewith the text of the agreement drawn up yesterday by our representatives which defines the interpretation to be placed by the British and Free French authorities upon the Syrian Armistice Convention. This agreement is authoritative, and supersedes or overrides any other interpretation of the convention as between the British and Free French authorities.

It is agreed that in the event of it being found by the Disarmament Commission that there has been substantial violation of the Armistice Convention by the Vichy forces, we shall declare that, as a sanction, the British and Free French authorities consider themselves free to take any steps they see fit to rally Vichy troops to Free France. In that event article 2 of the enclosed agreement would become null and void.

This exchange of letters should not be published except by our mutual consent. May I learn whether you agree? As soon as I receive your letter to this effect the agreement will become binding upon the military and civil authorities concerned.

Yours sincerely,

OLIVER LYTTTELTON.

Enclosure in No. 32.

Arrangement fixing the Interpretation to be given by the British and Free French Authorities to the Armistice Convention of July 14 putting an end to Hostilities in the Levant.

ARTICLE 1.

IT is recognised that the Free French Command has a pre-eminent interest in all questions affecting the Vichy troops. This interest shall be taken into special consideration in all matters concerning the stationing and cadres of the troops, and in particular the transfer of troops or individuals which may be necessary will be settled by understanding between the two commands concerned.

ARTICLE 2.

Article 8 of the Armistice Convention provides that the alternative of rallying to the Allied cause or of being repatriated will be left to the free choice of each individual. This liberty of choice can only mean that the Free French authorities will be allowed to explain their point of view to the personnel concerned with the same fullness and freedom granted to the Vichy authorities by the fact of the presence of Vichy officers and non-commissioned officers with their men.

Any arrangement which may have been made and which may conflict with the Armistice Convention on this point can in no way derogate from the principle established by the armistice. All measures of stationing and encadrement necessary to give full effect to article 8 will be applied.

ARTICLE 3.

As regards repatriation of the Vichy forces, the British Command will take into consideration the desires of the Free French Command so that full effect may be given to the terms of article 8 concerning free choice.⁽¹⁾

ARTICLE 4.

It is recognised that the war material is French property. The handing over will be effected by agreement between the two commands.

The Free French Command will give priority to employment of this material in the Middle East.

The Free French Command, by agreement with the British Command, will place at the disposal of the latter the material which it cannot utilise in the near future, account being taken of the constitution of the necessary reserves. The Free French Command, in agreement with the British Command, will be able to reassume possession of this material if it finds itself able to utilise it itself.

Free French technicians will be added to the British armourers and technicians for the purpose of receiving and examining the material.

Any sabotage will engage the responsibility of the person concerned and of the superior officers, who will be excluded from any guarantee afforded by the Armistice Convention.

ARTICLE 5.

The military services of the Vichy troops will continue to carry out their duties in accordance with the orders of the occupation authorities.

ARTICLE 6.

All the military establishments (supply service, signals, artillery, medical, equipment, repair workshops, dumps and establishments of the Air Force, yards and establishments of the Navy) will continue according to the orders of the occupation authorities to be run by their administration and personnel, who will be responsible for the preservation and maintenance of the establishments and of the material as is provided in the case of the material referred to in article 4.

This responsibility will only terminate upon regular discharge.

ARTICLE 7.

The special troops of the Levant which the Free French Command consider it useful to keep in being will form part of the Free French Forces.

⁽¹⁾ The period considered necessary by the Free French command for the purpose of the repatriation of the bulk of those who do not rally is about six weeks.

ARTICLE 8.

In view of the great importance for military operations which attaches to the maintenance of order in the Jebel Druse, it is agreed that the French Delegate-General will concert with the British Commander-in-chief on all important measures concerning the maintenance of order in that area.

ARTICLE 9.

Under reserve of the agreement to be established as regards the collaboration of the French and British services concerning security, it is recognised that the question of the civilians referred to in article 8 will fall within the competence of the French authority.

Arrangement fixant l'Interprétation à donner par les Autorités Britanniques et les Autorités Françaises Libres à la Convention d'Armistice du 14 juillet mettant fin aux Hostilités au Levant.

ARTICLE 1^{er}.

IL est reconnu que le commandement Français Libre a un intérêt prééminent dans toutes les questions intéressant les troupes de Vichy. Cet intérêt doit être pris en particulière considération pour tout ce qui concerne le stationnement et l'encadrement de ces troupes, et notamment les mutations de groupes ou d'individus qui seraient nécessaires seront prononcées par entente entre les deux commandements intéressés.

ARTICLE 2.

L'article 8 de la Convention d'Armistice prévoit que l'alternative de se rallier à la cause alliée ou d'être rapatrié sera laissée au libre choix de chaque individu. Cette liberté de choix ne peut que signifier qu'il sera permis aux autorités Françaises Libres d'expliquer leur point de vue au personnel visé avec la même plénitude et la même liberté accordée aux autorités de Vichy du fait de la présence d'officiers et de sous-officiers Vichystes auprès de leurs hommes.

Tout arrangement qui aurait pu être pris et qui serait en opposition avec la Convention d'Armistice sur ce point ne pourrait en rien entamer le principe établi par le susdit armistice. Toutes mesures de stationnement et d'encadrement nécessaires pour donner plein effet à l'article 8 seront appliquées.

ARTICLE 3.

En ce qui concerne le rapatriement des forces Vichystes le commandement Britannique prendra en considération les desiderata du commandement Français Libre afin que le plein effet soit donné aux termes de l'article 8 concernant le libre choix.⁽¹⁾

ARTICLE 4.

Il est reconnu que le matériel est propriété française. La prise en charge sera effectuée par entente entre les deux commandements.

Le commandement Français Libre emploiera ce matériel par priorité en Moyen-Orient.

Le commandement Français Libre par entente avec le commandement Britannique mettra à la disposition de celui-ci le matériel qu'il ne sera pas en mesure d'utiliser dans un avenir rapproché, compte tenu de la constitution des réserves nécessaires. Le commandement Français Libre d'accord avec le commandement Britannique pourra en reprendre la disposition s'il se trouve en mesure de l'utiliser lui-même.

Des techniciens Français Libres seront joints aux armuriers et aux techniciens Britanniques pour la réception et l'examen du matériel.

Toute détérioration volontaire entraînera la responsabilité du détenteur et de ses chefs, qui seront exclus de toute garantie arrêtée par la Convention d'Armistice.

⁽¹⁾ Le délai estimé nécessaire par le commandement Français Libre aux fins de rapatriement de l'ensemble des non ralliés est de l'ordre de six semaines.

ARTICLE 5.

Les services militaires des forces de Vichy continueront à assumer leurs fonctions selon les ordres des autorités d'occupation.

ARTICLE 6.

Tous les établissements militaires (intendance, transmission, artillerie, santé, train des équipages, ateliers de réparation, parcs et établissements de l'Armée de l'Air, parcs et établissements de la Marine) restent gérés selon les ordres de l'autorité d'occupation par leurs chefs et leur personnel, qui sont responsables de la conservation et de l'entretien des installations et des matériels comme il est prévu pour le matériel visé à l'article 4.

Cette responsabilité ne cessera qu'après décharge régulière.

ARTICLE 7.

Les troupes spéciales du Levant que le commandement Français Libre estimera devoir conserver font partie des forces Françaises Libres.

ARTICLE 8.

Etant donné la grande importance pour les opérations militaires que revêt le maintien de l'ordre dans le Djebel Druse, il est entendu que le Délégué général français se concertera avec le Commandant en chef Britannique pour toute mesure importante concernant le maintien de l'ordre dans cette région.

ARTICLE 9.

Sous réserve de l'entente à établir en ce qui concerne la collaboration des services français et anglais concernant la sécurité, il est reconnu que la question concernant les personnes civiles, visées à l'article 8, sera du ressort de l'autorité française.

[E 5252/62/89]

(2)

General de Gaulle to Minister of State.

Cher Captain Lyttelton,

Beyrouth, le 27 juillet 1941.

JE reçois votre lettre du 24 juillet 1941 et le texte de l'accord que nos représentants respectifs ont établi comme interprétation de la Convention d'Armistice en Syrie. Je me fais un plaisir de vous dire que j'approuve ce texte qui, dès à présent, engage les autorités militaires et civiles françaises qu'il concerne.

D'autre part, je prends acte de votre accord sur la sanction à prendre à l'égard des éléments français dissidents dits "de Vichy," s'il est établi que ces éléments ont, comme je le pense, effectivement violé la convention.

Il est entendu que ni votre lettre du 24 juillet, ni ma réponse, ne seront publiées sans que nous y consentions tous les deux.

Bien sincèrement à vous,

C. DE GAULLE.

[E 5265/62/89]

No. 33.

Exchange of Letters between the Minister of State and General de Gaulle concerning the Collaboration between the British and the Free French Authorities in the Middle East.

(1)

Minister of State to General de Gaulle.

My dear General,

Cairo, July 25, 1941.

I AM sending you herewith the text of an agreement and of a supplementary agreement concerning the collaboration between the British and the Free French authorities in the Middle East, which we drew up together this morning.

[23981]

G 2

I should like to take this opportunity of assuring you that on the British side we recognise the historic interests of France in the Levant. Great Britain has no interest in Syria or the Lebanon except to win the war. We have no desire to encroach in any way upon the position of France. Both Free France and Great Britain are pledged to the independence of Syria and the Lebanon. When this essential step has been taken, and without prejudice to it, we freely admit that France should have the dominant privileged position in the Levant among all European nations. It was in this spirit that we approached the problems under discussion. You will have seen the recent utterances of the Prime Minister in this sense, and I am glad to reaffirm them now.

I shall be happy to learn that the enclosed texts have your full agreement and approval.

Yours sincerely,
OLIVER LYTTTELTON.

Enclosure 1 in No. 33.

Agreement concerning the Collaboration between the British and Free French Authorities in the Middle East.

ARTICLE 1.

THE Middle East constitutes a single theatre of operations. The defensive and offensive operations of the Allies in this theatre shall be co-ordinated.

Further, by reason of the special obligations of France in the territory of the Levant States, it is primarily to the defence of this territory that Free France has decided to devote, in the present general situation, the French forces in the Middle East and the Syrian and Lebanese forces.

ARTICLE 2.

Any plan of operations which entails the employment of French forces jointly with the British forces, or which directly affects the territory of the Levant States, shall be drawn up in common by the British command and the French command.

In view of the large preponderance at the present time of the British forces in comparison with the French forces in the Middle East, it is for the British command in the Middle East theatre of operations to draw up plans and to fix the rôle to be played by the French forces in the joint operations. The British command in the theatre of operations in the Middle East will determine this rôle by delegation from General de Gaulle. The same delegation will apply to any force (échelon) forming part of the British command subordinated to the Commander-in-chief in the Middle East, when the Commander-in-chief has charged such a force to direct operations which interest the territory of the Levant States or entail the employment of French forces. At the same time, if the French command considers that the plan drawn up or the rôle assigned to the French forces are incompatible with its special responsibilities concerning the Levant States, it will refer to General de Gaulle. The question shall then be decided by agreement between His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom and General de Gaulle.

ARTICLE 3.

The command of the British and French forces operating in the same zone of action is normally exercised by a British officer or by a French officer, according as the British forces or the French forces preponderate there. In any case, the organic links of units, large or small, will be maintained as far as possible. The French officer or the command of French forces subordinated to a British officer exercises the right of and receives facilities for reporting directly on its situation, assignment and requirements to the superior unit of its own army, and to remain in direct liaison with that unit. Such communications may be in secret form.

ARTICLE 4.

Whatever may be the proportion and the assignment of the British forces and the French forces, the territorial command (direction or military control of public services, general security, gendarmerie, police, exploitation of local resources, &c.) belongs to the French authority in Syria and the Lebanon.

The British forces which may operate in the territory of Syria and the Lebanon and the French forces which may operate in other territories of the Middle East may themselves assure their tactical security and utilise all resources which are necessary for their needs. They do so, so far as possible, with the assistance of the territorial command.

In enemy territory the territorial command is shared between the British authorities and the French authorities in accordance with the proportionate relationship between the British and French forces in the various parts of the territory concerned.

ARTICLE 5.

In any case, the British forces and the French forces depend respectively and exclusively from the British command and the French command in all matters concerning discipline, organisation of troops and services, assignment of personnel and material, turn-out, postal censorship, &c.

Accord concernant la Collaboration des Autorités Britanniques et Françaises Libres dans le Moyen-Orient.

ARTICLE 1^{er}.

LE Moyen-Orient constitue un seul théâtre d'opérations. Les opérations défensives ou offensives des Alliés doivent y être coordonnées.

D'autre part, en raison des obligations particulières de la France sur le territoire des Etats du Levant, c'est en premier lieu à la défense de ce territoire que la France Libre a décidé de consacrer, dans la situation générale actuelle, les forces françaises d'Orient et les forces syriennes et libanaises.

ARTICLE 2.

Tout plan d'opération qui implique l'emploi de forces françaises conjointement avec des forces britanniques ou qui affecte directement le territoire des Etats du Levant doit être établi en commun par le commandement britannique et le commandement français.

Etant donné la grande prépondérance actuelle des forces britanniques par rapport aux forces françaises en Orient, il appartient au commandement britannique du théâtre d'opérations d'Orient d'arrêter le plan et de fixer le rôle à jouer par les forces françaises dans les opérations communes. Le commandement britannique du théâtre d'opérations d'Orient fixera ce rôle par délégation du Général de Gaulle. La même délégation devra s'appliquer à tout échelon du commandement britannique subordonné au Commandant en chef en Orient, quand ce Commandant en chef aura chargé cet échelon de diriger des opérations intéressant le territoire des Etats du Levant ou impliquant l'emploi de forces françaises. Toutefois, si le commandement français estime que le plan arrêté ou le rôle fixé aux forces françaises sont incompatibles avec ses responsabilités particulières concernant les Etats du Levant, il en réfèrera au Général de Gaulle. La question sera alors tranchée par accord du Gouvernement de Sa Majesté Britannique dans le Royaume-Uni et du Général de Gaulle.

ARTICLE 3.

Le commandement des forces britanniques et françaises opérant dans une même zone d'action est exercé normalement par un officier britannique ou par un officier français suivant que les forces britanniques ou les forces françaises y sont prépondérantes. Dans tous les cas, les liens organiques des unités, grandes ou petites, sont maintenus dans toute la mesure du possible.

Le commandement de forces britanniques subordonnées à un officier français ou le commandement de forces françaises subordonnées à un officier britannique exerce le droit et reçoit les facilités de rendre compte directement de sa situation, de sa mission et de ses demandes à l'échelon supérieur dans son armée, et de rester en liaison directe avec cet échelon. Il peut donner une forme secrète à ces communications.

ARTICLE 4.

Quelles que soient la proportion et la mission des forces britanniques et des forces françaises, le commandement territorial (direction ou contrôle militaire des services publics, sécurité générale, gendarmerie, police, exploitation des ressources locales, &c.) appartient à l'autorité française en Syrie et au Liban.

Les forces britanniques qui opéreraient sur le territoire de la Syrie et du Liban et les forces françaises qui opéreraient sur d'autres territoires du Moyen-Orient peuvent y assurer par elles-mêmes leur sécurité immédiate et y utiliser toute ressource qui serait nécessaire à leurs besoins. Elles le font, autant que possible, par concours du commandement territorial.

En territoire ennemi le commandement territorial est réparti entre l'autorité britannique et l'autorité française d'après la proportion des forces britanniques et françaises dans les diverses parties de ce territoire.

ARTICLE 5.

Dans tous les cas, les forces britanniques et les forces françaises dépendent respectivement et exclusivement du commandement britannique et du commandement français pour tout ce qui concerne la discipline, l'organisation des troupes et des services, l'affectation du personnel et du matériel, la tenue, la censure postale, &c.

Enclosure 2 in No. 33.

Supplementary Agreement concerning the Collaboration between British and Free French Authorities in the Middle East.

ARTICLE 1.

General de Gaulle recognises that the British High Command in the Levant is empowered to take all measures of defence which it judges necessary to take against the common enemy.

If it should happen that any of these measures should appear to be contrary to the interests of France in the Levant, the question would be submitted to the British Government and to General de Gaulle.

ARTICLE 2.

General de Gaulle accepts the principle of raising additional Desert Troops for the requirements of operations.

He does not rule out, if it appears indispensable, the attachment of certain specialised British officers in the Desert Units.

He sees no objection to the employment in the Syrian Desert of Desert Troops recruited in the Nejd, Transjordan, Iraq or other territories by the British authorities.

ARTICLE 3.

A section of the British Military Security Service will be attached to the Sûreté générale of the Levant States with the object of ensuring liaison with the British command and with the security services of the adjoining States and of concerting with the French service the general measures which the British command may consider necessary.

Accord supplémentaire concernant la Collaboration des Autorités Britanniques et Françaises Libres dans le Moyen-Orient.

ARTICLE 1^{re}.

LE Général de Gaulle reconnaît au commandement britannique au Levant qualité pour prendre toutes mesures de défense qu'il jugera nécessaire de prendre contre l'ennemi commun.

S'il se trouvait qu'une de ces mesures parût contraire aux intérêts propres de la France au Levant, la question serait soumise au Gouvernement britannique et au Général de Gaulle.

ARTICLE 2.

Le Général de Gaulle accepte le principe de lever des forces supplémentaires du Désert pour les nécessités des opérations.

Il n'exclut pas que, si cela apparaît indispensable, certains officiers britanniques spécialisés soient détachés dans les unités du Désert.

Il ne voit aucun inconvénient à ce que des troupes du Désert, recrutées dans le Nedj, en Transjordanie, en Irak ou dans d'autres territoires par les autorités britanniques, soient employées dans le Désert syrien.

ARTICLE 3.

Un élément du service de sécurité militaire britannique sera détaché auprès de la Sûreté générale des Etats du Levant dans le but d'assurer la liaison avec le commandement britannique et avec les services correspondants des Etats limitrophes et de se concerter avec les services français sur les mesures d'ensemble que le commandement britannique pourra juger nécessaires.

[E 5253/62/89]

(2)

General de Gaulle to Minister of State.

Cher Captain Lyttelton,

Beyrouth, le 27 juillet 1941.

JE reçois votre lettre du 25 juillet. Je suis heureux de prendre note des assurances que vous voulez bien m'y donner concernant le désintéressement de la Grande-Bretagne en Syrie et au Liban et le fait que la Grande-Bretagne reconnaît par avance la position dominante et privilégiée de la France au Levant lorsque ces Etats se trouveront indépendants.

Le texte de l'accord et du supplément à cet accord que je trouve annexé à votre lettre et que nous avons arrêté ensemble au Caire le 25 juillet sera mis immédiatement en application par les autorités militaires françaises qu'il concerne.

Bien sincèrement à vous,

C. DE GAULLE.

[E 6175/62/89]

No. 34.

Sir M. Lampson to Mr. Eden.—(Received October 1.)

(No. 846.)

HIS Majesty's Ambassador presents his compliments to His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and, with reference to Beirut telegram No. 30 to Cairo, addressed to Foreign Office, No. 3 of the 10th August, 1941, has the honour to transmit herewith a copy of letters exchanged between Captain Oliver Lyttelton and General C. de Gaulle on the 7th August, 1941.

Cairo, September 10, 1941.

Enclosure in No. 34.

Exchange of Letters between the Minister of State and General de Gaulle concerning British Policy in Syria and the Lebanon.

My dear General,

AT the conclusion of our talk to-day I am happy to repeat to you the assurance that Great Britain has no interest in Syria or the Lebanon except to win the war. We have no desire to encroach in any way upon the position of France. Both Free France and Great Britain are pledged to the independence of Syria and the Lebanon. When this essential step has been taken, and without prejudice to it, we freely admit that France should have the predominant position in Syria and the Lebanon over any other European Power. It is in this spirit that we have always acted. You will have seen the recent utterances of the Prime Minister in this sense. I am glad to reaffirm them now to our friends and allies, who have our full sympathy and support.

On our side, I am happy again to receive your assurances of the determination of Free France, as the friend and ally of Great Britain and in accordance with the agreements and declarations which you have already made, to pursue relentlessly to the finish the war against the common enemy. I am happy that we should thus reaffirm our complete understanding and agreement.

Yours sincerely,

OLIVER LYTTTELTON.

[23981]

Mon cher Captain Lyttelton,

JE reçois la lettre que vous voulez bien m'écrire comme conclusion de notre entretien d'aujourd'hui. Je suis heureux de prendre acte des assurances que vous m'y donnez de nouveau concernant le désintéressement de la Grande-Bretagne en Syrie et au Liban et le fait que la Grande-Bretagne y reconnaît par avance la position prééminente et privilégiée de la France lorsque ces États se trouveront indépendants conformément à l'engagement que la France Libre a pris à leur égard.

Je m'empresse de vous répéter à cette occasion que la France Libre, c'est-à-dire la France, est résolue à poursuivre la guerre, aux côtés de la Grande-Bretagne, son amie et son alliée, jusqu'à la victoire complète contre nos ennemis communs.

Bien sincèrement à vous,

C. DE GAULLE.

[E 6176/62/89]

No. 35.

Sir M. Lampson to Mr. Eden.—(Received October 1.)

(No. 852. Secret.)

HIS Majesty's Ambassador presents his compliments to His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and with reference to Embassy telegram No. 2827 of the 10th September, 1941, has the honour to transmit herewith a copy of telegram No. 137, Spears (Saving), dated the 2nd September, 1941: Syria, Weekly Political Summary.

Cairo, September 13, 1941.

Enclosure in No. 35.

General Spears to Sir M. Lampson (Cairo).

(No. 137. Spears. Saving.)

(Telegraphic.) *En clair.*

Weekly Political Summary.

1. Supply Situation.

BOTH economically and politically this seems to have been the most pressing problem during the week, and it is therefore mentioned first. Various authorities have so far failed to arrange for a reasonable distribution even of wheat which is actually in Syria, if not in Lebanon, and which is sorely needed in some parts. Owing mainly to inter-State jealousy, all movement of grain without special permit was previously forbidden and distribution has been inefficient. Speculation and hoarding are other main causes of the trouble. The joint buying commission which was mentioned in the previous summary achieved nothing. The loan of some wheat and flour from Palestine and the issue of a certain number of special licences have been small palliatives. The French authorities have now been urgently requested to take over more direct charge from local Governments and to agree to further British collaboration. At this time, when it is customary to lay in stocks for the winter, they are not available in the populous centres of both Syria and the Lebanon, and the price of bread has been rising unduly. For this unnecessary and discreditable state of affairs, as, indeed, for most troubles here now, the British are generally regarded to be responsible. Bread riots, which would be most unfortunate, have been threatened in Damascus. General Catroux is there, and is understood to be alive to the importance of the question.

2. State of Syria.

(a) *Damascus.*—No sign of any unity of view on Syrian politics has been shown in the press beyond the lowest common factor of all, which demands a change in the present Government, some attempts to implement our promises and an improvement of the commercial and financial position. An interesting article in *Les Echos* referred to propaganda of the Emir Abdulla, and said that the moment was inopportune as, until Syrian unity was achieved, it was useless to urge larger Arab confederations. General Catroux arrived at Damascus on

26th August, and called Hashem el Atassi from Homs to discuss, it is thought, the latter's nomination as President of the Syrian Government. Hashem el Atassi probably would accept, with the approval of Shukriyatly, who, short of military force, remains the real power and whose continued presence there constitutes a menace. He apparently still expects Axis invasion, but would be glad for Hashem el Atassi to take temporary office under the real control of himself and other Nationalist extremists. Sheikh Kamal Qassab, according to Lieut.-Colonel Gardener's report, has refused to collaborate with such a Government. Sheikh Taj el Din is also unlikely to participate, and another report says that General Collett is backing him for the presidency, despite the views of General Catroux. Damascus is in a most discontented state. Those who welcomed us feel strongly that we have sold them to the French for the second time. General Catroux has not even kept the British authorities informed regarding his negotiations. In associating themselves so closely with Hashem Bey, the French have enhanced the reputation of a party who, on our arrival, were preparing to flee and whose dishonesty in past administrations is well known to the public. The supply problem is, however, still the main consideration of the people. The news that bread prices would be again raised on 30th August was followed by threats of a strike, which Lieut.-Colonel Gardener regarded as serious. The announcement that Syria was no longer to be regarded as enemy territory did not give much confidence, for the "black" rate for Syrian currency in terms of sterling fell somewhat; this fall may have been connected with renewed reports of the loss of the gold reserve of the local banks.

(b) *Aleppo.*—(Notes will be appended if report arrives in time.)

(c) *Jezireh.*—Round Dei Ez Zor the situation remains unsatisfactory. Special objection is taken both by Squadron-Leader Burgess Watson and by inhabitants to work of M. Sinibaldi, a Vichy customs officer, who was sent away by General Slim but was later reinstated, and of Captain Lacroix, an S.S. officer who has returned there. A serious raid by members of Fedaan on Walda tribe near Raqqa has worsened effect, mentioned in last summary, of French appointment of Mujhem of Fedaan over other tribes. There is no recent news of the upper Jezireh province centred at Hassatche, where there is at present no political officer.

3. *Republic of Lebanon.*—At Beirut, no definite political moves are known to have taken place during the absence of General Catroux in Damascus. Realisation of the necessity of coming to terms with the F.F. seems to be slowly gaining ground, and important parties envisage some sort of federation of the Lebanon with Syria, which would leave internal autonomy whilst assuring a common economic policy. The press has chiefly concentrated on the high cost of living, the wheat question and the lack of facilities for trade with Palestine. An outspoken article in the *Saout El Ahrar* on 23rd August described the evil of past French administrations and expressed hope for future improvement. Other articles complained that the F.F. were limiting their political contacts to a small unrepresentative group of politicians. After only one day at Damascus the Lebanon buying commission for wheat returned, having decided that exorbitant prices were being demanded by Syrian merchants. Bread prices rose as the supplies that arrived from Syria for individual purchasers or from Palestine were only small.

4. *State of the Alaouites.*—Colonel Jourdain, the previous Vichy delegate, was relieved by Generale de Brigade Montcler. One of the last acts of the retiring Delegate was to arrange for the forced resignation and banishment from the area of Chowkat Abbas, the Administrator of the Alaouites, and of Ibrahim Kindje, a leading member of the Council. They may have intrigued wrongly against the Delegate, so, though they were friendly to British, no action has been taken in response to petitions for our intervention. Some protest is, however, being lodged against the imprisonment without charge of an Alaouite lawyer who is well known to have worked for the British and who was recently used by General Wilson in that area. The wheat situation remains difficult and peasants are reported to be eating grain that is needed for seed.

5. *State of the Jebel Druze.*—A useful meeting took place on the 29th at Soueide between Brigadier Dunn, Colonel Olive, the Delegate who is now with the F.F. Emir Hassen and Sultan Pacha El Atrash. The last named, who is perhaps the most intransigent opponent of French in the Jebel, spoke freely to Colonel Olive and it is not thought that this will have done harm. The French still seem to encourage the anti-Atrash elements instead of working for unity, and the continued presence at Shabha of Captain Nouvelle, the Vichy S.S. officer, has bewildered and disappointed men genuinely interested in the welfare of

their country. The question of the Druze Legion has not been settled and it is still thought that its amalgamation with the Groupement Druze offers the only satisfactory solution.

6. *Relations with Free French and General.*—The departure of Vichy troops and civilians from Beirut has continued without special troubles and their removal will naturally tend to improve relations. The head of the British Security Mission has been received helpfully and hopes to reduce the work of enemy agents who are working against our collaboration. There seems no doubt about the general satisfaction regarding the quick result of the campaign in Persia; Turkey's position is watched with anxiety but the Persian incident is recognised to have strengthened the odds on Turkey's resistance.

[E 6176/62/89]

No. 36.

Sir M. Lampson to Mr. Eden.—(Received October 1.)

(No. 862. Secret.)

HIS Majesty's Ambassador presents his compliments to His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and has the honour to transmit herewith a copy of telegram No. 165 Spears (Saving) dated 9th September, 1941: Syria. Weekly political summary.

Cairo, September 15, 1941.

Enclosure No. 36.

General Spears to Sir M. Lampson.

(No. 165. Saving.)
(Telegraphic.)

September 9, 1941.

Weekly Political Summary.

1. Food Supply.

This remains the main problem. On 30th August, as a result of a local order which increased bread prices by 60 per cent., shops in a quarter of Damascus were closed in protest. This form of strike was called off without disorders when it was shown that the higher price was that ruling in most parts of Syria and that it was unfair for the previous subsidy to apply only to Damascus. Some 4,000 tons of wheat, of which 60 per cent. for Syria and 40 per cent. for Lebanon, were then bought in Jezireh at a reasonable price of £S.133-135 the ton, but very little has yet been moved to needy areas owing to transport difficulties. On 6th and 7th September there were demonstrations at Hama, where British troops had to be called out to keep order, and small demonstrations are reported from other places. The Free French are so far unwilling to give to the British any control over the matter of distribution, yet they have not shown proof of their ability to undertake these arrangements themselves or to make Syrian and Lebanese Governments work together properly regarding distribution or prevention of hoarding. A new Syrian law created a commission which is to be the sole organisation entitled to buy wheat: after sufficient wheat has been purchased for the State the market is to be declared open.

2. State of Syria.

Damascus.—General Catroux continued his political talks. It seems that the French advances to Hashem el Atassi were checked, as the Nationalist demands were too extreme, and also because general reaction against the apparent approval given by the French to that Nationalist section was unexpectedly vigorous. General Collett, who told Lieutenant-Colonel Gardener about the discussions only after the latter had reminded him of the British interest in the matter, named Sheikh Taj ed Din as a possible alternative head of any new Government. As regards the grant of independence, the French had gained the impression that in general what the public wanted was food and some appearance of independence as proof of future intentions. No definite decision is known to have been reached, but a change of the present unsatisfactory Government is intended.

Arrests have not yet taken place of leading enemy agents, who are apparently increasing their activities with the continued freedom of action. The Sûreté was busier with rounding up less offensive men, including a number who had entered as camp followers with the British troops.

Both at Damascus and at Aleppo there are signs of better press liaison and even of facilities being given to British propaganda.

Aleppo.—The position was quiet. The Free French claim that they have now arranged for enough personnel to run the country satisfactorily, and that collaboration with the British will be possible, in spite of attempts to the contrary by disaffected elements. Five of the most undesirable S.S. officers are leaving, and, as there are not sufficient Free French officers to replace them all, certain districts will be united. Some useful ex-Vichy officials are also unexpectedly remaining.

Jezireh.—No reports have arrived: if anything of importance is heard later a telegram will be sent.

3. Republic of the Lebanon.

Beirut.—Public, press and political interest throughout the entire Lebanon has been concentrated on the problem of wheat, to the virtual exclusion of all other topics. The general lack of confidence in the future is having a cumulative effect by inducing merchants and producers to withhold from the market such wheat as they have.

The political situation has not materially changed. The so-called Constitutional party, which includes some of the more pro-British Christians and more moderate Moslems, is uneasy at their continued exclusion from contact with the Free French, and has been sending out feelers to British authorities.

4. State of the Alaouites.

Salameh Bey el Masri, the new Administrator, who was appointed in place of the Chawkat Abbas, is the object of intrigues by supporters of his predecessor, for one reason because he is not of Lebanese nationality, though of Alaouite descent. No actual trouble has arisen.

General Monclar, the Delegué, went to Damascus to try and arrange for wheat supplies, but none had arrived by 5th September, and during the week ending then the price had risen from 5, already a high price, to 30 piastres a kilo. Discontent is naturally great, and enemy sympathisers make full use of the situation.

5. State of the Jebel Druze.

Since the general meeting reported in the last summary there have been no events of political importance, and the fate of the Druze Legion and of the 15 Gendarmes who "rallied" has not yet been decided.

The collection of taxes has commenced, in spite of protests against payment because the war had upset the position. Much extra money in subsidies and pay have been reaching the population in recent months.

6. Relations with the Free French.

Two good signs have already been mentioned—the removal of some objectionable S.S. officers and a less obstructive attitude at Damascus, specially regarding press and propaganda. The check in French advances to Hashem el Atassi, our avowed opponent, was also satisfactory, as was also the frankness of General Collett when he did finally discuss the political situation with Colonel Gardener. The illness of General Catroux may have been the reason for his slowness in passing on information.

The case, however, of Captain Moron, the port official at Beirut, remains unsettled, and the Alaouite lawyer, whose help was useful to us, remains imprisoned in Damascus without charge.

[E 6250/62/89]

No. 37.

Letter from General Catroux, dated September 29, to the President of the Syrian Republic.—(Received in the Foreign Office, October 2, 1941.)

M. le Président,

LORSQUE nous, les Français Libres rebelles à la défaite, nous avons, à l'appel du Général de Gaulle, poursuivi la lutte aux côtés de nos vaillants Alliés britanniques, nous n'avons pas seulement relevé l'épée de la France, nous nous

sommes aussi saisis, pour les continuer et les sauver, de son idéal, de son esprit, de sa tradition et de sa mission. Nous sommes identifiés à la France historique, vaillante, noble et fidèle à autrui comme à elle-même; et la France s'est reconnue en nous : nous en avons des milliers de témoignages, et le monde et le généreux peuple syrien ont retrouvé le visage et l'âme de la France en la France Libre. La France est en nous et avec nous. Voilà pourquoi j'ai le droit de paraître ici, non pas seulement au nom de la France Libre, mais au nom de la France. Voilà pourquoi les paroles que je vais prononcer engagent la France, la France qui vous avait fait une promesse que j'ai le devoir de tenir en son nom.

En accord avec notre Alliée la Grande-Bretagne, je proclame solennellement l'indépendance de la Syrie dont je remets, Excellence, les destinées à votre sagesse et à votre expérience. Par cet acte, la France accomplit un devoir. Elle le fait spontanément et entièrement, en écartant les arrière-pensées et les sophismes, consciente de la maturité politique du peuple syrien, consciente aussi des garanties qu'elle s'acquiert à elle-même en liant ce peuple à elle par les chaînes indestructibles de la justice et de l'amitié.

L'amitié et la justice ont inspiré la reconnaissance de votre indépendance; elles inspireront de même le traité qui la garantira et qui posera des assises durables de l'alliance et des rapports franco-syriens. Cette alliance existe déjà virtuellement car les événements de guerre l'ont instituée en fait pour la durée des hostilités, non seulement entre la France et la Syrie, mais aussi entre votre pays et la Grande-Bretagne. La Syrie trouvera dans cette alliance de fait une sauvegarde pour sa jeune indépendance. Elle y trouvera aussi d'inévitables obligations. Ces sauvegardes et ces obligations se trouvent inscrites, en même temps que la reconnaissance de votre indépendance, dans une proclamation à la nation syrienne que je vais avoir l'honneur de vous lire et dont je vous remettrai un exemplaire pour être déposé aux archives de l'Etat.

Excellence, j'appelle les bénédictions de Dieu sur vous-même et sur l'Etat de Syrie indépendant et souverain, et je remercie le Ciel de m'avoir procuré la faveur d'être associé, moi, votre indéfectible ami, au grand événement qui s'accomplit aujourd'hui.

Declaration of Syrian Independence.

Le 8 juin dernier, lors de l'entrée au Levant des armées alliées, dans un manifeste que je vous ai adressé au nom de la France Libre et de son chef, le Général de Gaulle, j'ai reconnu à la Syrie la qualité d'Etat souverain et indépendant sous la garantie d'un traité définissant nos rapports réciproques.

Le Gouvernement britannique, Allié de la France Libre, agissant en accord avec elle, s'est, par une déclaration simultanée, associé à cet acte politique important.

Le 16 de ce mois, j'ai rendu effective ma déclaration du 8 juin en la faisant passer du plan du principe acquis à celui des institutions et des réalités.

L'ère est donc ouverte où la Syrie, indépendante et souveraine, régira elle-même ses destinées.

Son Excellence le Cheik Tageddine-el-Hassani a accepté d'organiser le nouveau régime d'indépendance. Son expérience des affaires et son sentiment profond des nécessités publiques le désignaient pour cette haute mission. Je l'assure, ainsi que toute la nation syrienne, de mon appui et de ma loyale collaboration.

J'exercerai cette collaboration en m'inspirant des considérations ci-après :

L'Etat syrien jouit dès maintenant des droits et prérogatives attachés à la qualité d'Etat indépendant et souverain. Ces droits et ces prérogatives subiront les seules restrictions qu'imposent l'état actuel de guerre, la sécurité du territoire et des armées alliées.

Par ailleurs, sa position d'allié de fait de la France Libre et de la Grande-Bretagne requiert une étroite conformité de sa politique avec celle des Alliés.

En accédant à la vie internationale indépendante, la Syrie succède naturellement aux droits et obligations souscrits jusqu'ici en son nom.

Elle a la faculté de désigner des représentants diplomatiques auprès des pays où elle jugera que ses intérêts exigent l'installation d'une pareille représentation. Partout ailleurs, les autorités de la France Libre lui prêteront leurs offices pour assurer la défense des droits et intérêts généraux de la Syrie, ainsi que la protection des ressortissants syriens.

L'Etat syrien a la faculté de constituer ses forces militaires nationales; la France Libre lui prêtera à cette fin son concours.

La Grande-Bretagne s'étant déjà engagée à plusieurs reprises à reconnaître l'indépendance de la Syrie, la France Libre interviendra sans délai auprès des autres Puissances alliées ou amies pour que celles-ci reconnaissent également l'indépendance de l'Etat syrien.

La France Libre considère que l'Etat de Syrie constitue politiquement et territorialement une unité indivisible dont l'intégrité doit être préservée de tout démembrement. Elle favorisera en conséquence le resserrement des liens politiques, culturels et économiques qui unissent les différentes fractions de la Syrie. A cette fin, le délégué général et plénipotentiaire de la France Libre revisera les textes fixant les statuts particuliers accordés antérieurement à certaines régions, de manière que, tout en conservant l'autonomie financière et administrative, à laquelle elles se montrent fermement attachées, elles soient politiquement subordonnées au pouvoir central syrien. Ainsi se trouvent conciliés le principe de l'unité syrienne et les aspirations particulières de ces régions.

Il demeure, en outre, entendu que les garanties de droit public inscrites dans les statuts organiques en faveur des individus et des communautés sont maintenues et recevront leur plein effet.

La France Libre s'engage à s'entremettre auprès de la Syrie et du Liban afin que soient recherchées et instituées les bases d'une collaboration économique entre les deux pays et que soient éliminées les difficultés que cette collaboration rencontre dans le présent. Cette entente, nécessaire entre deux pays frères et voisins, doit garantir les droits légitimes et respectifs des deux parties et établir leurs rapports sur la base de la confiance réciproque.

En vue de sauvegarder l'indépendance et la souveraineté de la Syrie et pour mener à bien la lutte commune, les Alliés assumeront, pendant la période de guerre, la défense du pays. A cette fin, le Gouvernement syrien mettra à la disposition du commandement allié, pour coopérer à la défense du territoire, les forces nationales syriennes. De même, le commandement allié disposera dès maintenant, dans la mesure où les nécessités militaires l'exigeront, de l'équipement et des services publics de la Syrie, notamment des voies de communication, des aérodromes et des aménagements côtiers. La défense du territoire exige également qu'une étroite collaboration existe en tous temps entre le Général commandant en chef et délégué général et les services de gendarmerie, de police et de sûreté de l'Etat syrien : la Syrie doit être, en effet, défendue en temps de guerre non seulement contre ses ennemis du dehors, mais aussi contre ceux du dedans.

En raison de l'inclusion de la Syrie dans la zone de guerre et dans le système économique et financier des Alliés, la plus étroite collaboration entre le Gouvernement syrien et les Alliés est également nécessaire pour assurer, pendant la durée des hostilités et dans l'intérêt commun, l'obligation et le respect de toutes mesures prises en vue de conduire à bonne fin la guerre économique. Dans ce but, pendant la durée des hostilités, les plus grandes facilités seront accordées pour assurer, dans la plus large mesure, la liberté des échanges entre la Syrie et les pays du bloc sterling.

La Syrie, entrée maintenant dans le bloc sterling, adoptera dans l'ordre économique et financier, et notamment dans le domaine du change, les mesures nécessaires pour rester en harmonie avec la politique générale du bloc sterling.

Les stipulations qui précèdent concilient le respect de l'indépendance et de la souveraineté syriennes avec les nécessités de l'état de guerre. Elles sont inspirées par une pensée unique qui est celle de gagner la guerre et d'assurer par ce moyen à la Syrie un avenir de peuple libre. Elles apportent au problème franco-syrien une solution qui procède de la volonté de la France Libre de ne pas retarder, malgré la guerre, l'accomplissement des aspirations nationales syriennes et l'exécution des engagements des Alliés. Mais il est nécessaire qu'un règlement définitif y soit substitué au plus tôt sous la forme du traité franco-syrien, qui consacrera définitivement l'indépendance du pays.

Vive la Syrie indépendante, vive la France!

[E 6303/62/89]

No. 38.

Sir M. Lampson to Mr. Eden.—(Received October 4.)

(No. 921.)

HIS Majesty's Ambassador presents his compliments to His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and has the honour to transmit herewith a copy of telegram No. 244, Spears, Saving, dated the 23rd September, 1941: Syria: Weekly political summary.

Cairo, September 29, 1941.

Enclosure in No. 38.

General Spears to Sir M. Lampson.(No. 244. Saving.)
(Telegraphic.)*Beirut, September 23, 1941.**Weekly Political Summary.*1. *Wheat Supply.*

FEARS of a wheat shortage, coupled with rocketing market prices, had, by the middle of September, produced a state bordering on panic in many towns of Syria and the Lebanon. Demonstrations took place and strikes and riots threatened. Though there was very little actual hunger, people recalled the famine that accompanied the last Great War. This spectre has now been removed, at least to a certain distance, by the action finally taken by the Free French authorities, market prices have fallen by varying amounts, and the general feeling is consequently much easier. The future course of events will naturally depend largely on public confidence in the ability of the authorities to coax on to the market the large stocks which exist in the country or, alternatively, to supply by import.

Of the 500 tons of flour already received by the U.K.C.C., 400 tons have been released for distribution to the more distressed regions.

Wheat is now trickling through from the Jezireh to Beirut, but still only in small quantities.

The M.E.S.C. is proposing to arrange for shipments of wheat totalling 80,000 tons to arrive here between now and March 1942. This should facilitate the execution of the "forward selling" plan mentioned in the last report.

2. *Syria.*

The proclamation of Syrian independence and the appointment of Sheikh Taj ed Din el Hasani as President of the Republic on the 16th September passed everywhere without incident—and also without enthusiasm. Many of the people are no doubt favourably disposed towards the sheikh, but the general tendency is certainly to look upon events as being merely another change of Government brought about by the French. People have still to be convinced that the proposed handing over of the administration to the Syrians will be more than nominal.

Nationalist elements planned staging demonstrations, but, in the event, have contented themselves with violent verbal propaganda against Sheikh Taj, as being a French puppet of no influence or importance whatever. Even the more moderate Nationalists ask how the Free French have the effrontery to nominate him as President, when he cannot claim to represent the nation in any valid sense.

It is interesting to record that the general attitude of the Christian minorities to Mr. Churchill's speech is to take comfort in it as implying that no real independence would be granted until after the war.

Damascus.—It was the intention of the Free French to publish on the 15th September the exchange of letters whereby Sheikh Taj assumed the presidency of the new republic, together with a proclamation addressed by General Catroux to the Syrian people. In this document formal independence was to be announced (along the lines of the British Proclamation of Egyptian Independence of 28th February, 1922), and an outline given of reserved points. Prerogatives ceded were to include entire control of internal affairs, representation abroad and the formation of a small army.

Unfortunately, insufficient time was given to the British authorities for the examination and modification of the proposals, and the full proclamation was

accordingly not made. Nevertheless, the Free French felt impelled to proceed with the change in constitution and the appointment of Sheikh Taj, which was done on the morning of 16th September.

The demonstrations planned by the Nationalists never took place, and in the last few days there are signs of a possible split in their ranks. It is reported that some of the more moderate elements are considering approaching the British to protest against events.

Aleppo.—Not only have recent political events on the Damascus aroused no enthusiasm in Aleppo; the tendency is to regard them with indifference tinged with derision. Aleppins generally still have to be convinced that the change has any real significance, and, particularly, that it will bring any improvement to their lot of country cousins, excluded from the Government of the country.

Jebel Druze.—News of the appointment of Sheikh Taj and the formation of a new Government has been poorly received locally. The general view is that it is unlikely to last more than a couple of months. A great part of the political opinion of the Jebel appears to give support to Hashem el Atassi.

The new délégué, Colonel Olive, has paid visits to Salkhad and other villages and spoken of the intentions of Free France in the Levant, and notably of the necessity for the Jebel Druze to work and co-operate in the cause of Syrian independence. However, no specific statement on the new form of government in the Jebel has been published; the unpopular interpreters of previous S.S.O.'s have not been removed; and the Guard Mobile remains as a force under the direct orders of the délégué.

No further progress is reported to have been made by the commission appointed to deal with the question of the disbandment of the Druze Legion.

3. *The Lebanon.*

Beirut.—Some improvement in the wheat situation has taken place as a result of recent measures taken by the authorities. Supplies from the Jezireh are trickling slowly through to the Lebanon at the rate of a few trucks a day, sufficient to keep Beirut and Tripoli going, while further quantities are expected from M.E.S.C. by sea. So far, distribution methods have been fairly satisfactory, and, if larger quantities can now be handled on the same lines in the near future, the fears of the population should be largely allayed. Unexpectedly strong measures in the shape of the arrests of several of the most prominent Lebanese merchants for profiteering and hoarding has had a salutary effect.

The Lebanese continue to speculate as to Free French intentions towards their country following on their grant of independence to Syria. It is generally expected the French will choose a head of the State from among a small band of politicians who have always run with them in the past. Such an appointment would dissatisfy the majority, Moslems and Christians alike, but would doubtless be accepted with resignation, and probably with a further loss of sympathy for Great Britain for having allowed it.

4. *State of the Alaouites.*

The appointment of Sheikh Taj as Administrator has aroused very little popular interest, which is still centred in the wheat question. The politicians are inclined to suspend judgment, and several have gone to Damascus to find out the lie of the land.

[E 6303/62/89]

No. 39.

Sir M. Lampson to Mr. Eden.—(Received October 14.)

(No. 887.)

HIS Majesty's Ambassador presents his compliments to His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and has the honour to transmit herewith a copy of telegram No. 206, Spears Saving, dated the 16th September, 1941: Weekly Political Summary.

Cairo, September 22, 1941.

Enclosure in No. 39.

General Spears to Sir M. Lampson.(No. 206. Spears Saving.)
(Telegraphic.)

Beirut, September 16, 1941.

*Weekly Political Summary.*1. *Wheat Supply.*

THOUGH a few hundred tons of wheat have been fetched from Jezireh, the proportion that has reached the Lebanon, where the need is much the greatest, has not sufficed even for the daily needs and practically none has gone to the mountain areas which grow no wheat. Prices have risen again and "poor" bread has been further adulterated.

General Catroux announced that grain difficulties had been resolved by his having sent a representative to hasten supplies via Aleppo and by his having arranged for supplies from abroad; he referred apparently to a stock on the Indian market which he hoped could be easily brought for him.

Orders were also given for the punishment of speculators and two important arrests have been reported to-day. After discussion with Aleppo merchants and cultivators, General Spears urged the importance of severe punishments for speculators at the same time as freeing of the general grain market.

The agreement of the French is still awaited to the proposal to free the grain market as also to the further proposal—designed to assist in lowering wheat prices—that wheat shipments on their way to this country be offered for sale forward at firm prices, each successive offer being made at a lower price than the previous one.

Supplies from abroad, which the local authorities always press for in large quantities as providing the easiest solution for them, can, of course, only be made available in case of urgent necessity. A possible 1,400 tons of flour, this being about a week's supply for Beirut, is to be brought from Haifa and a further 10,000 tons "lease and lend" flour may follow from Egypt.

To supervise the distribution of these and all other imports for which the British are arranging, the French have agreed to the appointment of a maximum of fifteen inspectors.

Thus, though the present situation is bad, and though there is the certainty of some distress and trouble and the possibility of serious disturbances before urgent needs are supplied, definite progress has been made about hastening Syrian supplies and a further small import of flour, and about ensuring that future distribution will be less inefficient than at present.

2. *State of Syria.*

Damascus.—As grain-producing areas are fairly accessible, there was no real shortage of bread, yet anxiety was general.

The second topic of interest was the composition of the proposed new Syrian Government. As anticipated, Sheikh Taj ed Din was asked by the French to form a Government and to make an agreement on the lines of the Anglo-Egyptian declaration of 1922, allowing defence and security, and also possibly food supplies, to be controlled by the French, but assuming for Syria an independent status regarding representation abroad and the creation of a Defence Ministry.

Other parties will doubtless try to insist on elections as a preliminary to any such arrangement and in them the Nationalist *bloc* under Shukri Quwatli would almost certainly gain a majority. It is most unlikely that this *bloc* would co-operate satisfactorily with the Allies. Recent local strikes have been more a threat from the Nationalists of further trouble if their wishes are not met than a result of real hunger, though the food situation is bad enough to enable them to exploit it dangerously. General Catroux, after some days' indisposition at Beirut, has returned to Damascus in connexion with the political situation.

General Collet has given further proof of his wish to collaborate over propaganda and he has also promised to instruct S.S. officers to be much more communicative to local British Commanders.

Aleppo.—The week was uneventful. Politically, everyone was watching the Damascus negotiations.

As most wheat supplies from the Jezireh pass through Aleppo, there was no actual bread shortage, but the position was watched with anxiety. General Spears's discussion with merchants and others has already been mentioned. It was admitted that sufficient stocks actually exist in the country and the plan to punish speculators and simultaneously to free the market was generally approved. Stocks that are now hidden because the official price is low would then move to

main centres both to avoid prosecution and to benefit from the high prices now prevailing. Thus the shortage would end and prices would fall to a reasonable level.

Jezireh.—No change in the situation has been reported. It is not known what action the French propose to take against the Fedaan tribe, who were the aggressors in serious fighting last month against the Walda, who, in addition to losing over 100 men killed, had their villages pillaged. Mujhim, the paramount Sheikh of the Fedaan, had been given extra arms by the Vichy forces and had obviously allowed them to be used for private purposes, though the Free French had recently shown him favour over other tribes.

Wheat is apparently offered for sale at £S.180 the ton in the Jezireh and this is only half the price it fetches in the Lebanon and even in parts of Syria.

Jebel Druze.—At a meeting on 11th September, under the presidency of Colonel Cazeaux, at Soueida, agreement was reached on military questions regarding the disbandment of the Druze Legion and of reinstatement in the Groupement Druze of those who so wished and also of the fifteen men whose awkward position has been mentioned in previous summaries. Settlement of the method of giving some political assurances to the Legion before disbandment has still to be arranged. If that can be done now, the whole matter should be cleared up by the end of September. The majority of the men of the Druze Legion are likely to opt to join the T.J.F.F.

The unwanted S.S. officer has been moved from Sh'aba yet neither his nor other offices have yet been definitely closed.

Tax collection has started without trouble.

3. *Lebanon Republic.*

Beirut.—It is in the Lebanon that the wheat crisis is most serious. Peaceful demonstrations took place in nearly every town.

Political developments in Damascus have caused some uneasiness in the Lebanon as to what future is intended for them, but so far General Catroux does not seem to have begun consultations with a view to any status of the Lebanon. The desire of the Lebanese for autonomy, combined with close economic relations with Syria, seems to be crystallising, though Moslems and Christians hold widely divergent views as to their political relations with Syria in the future. Mr. Churchill's speech aroused much interest, for the unabridged version, though not published here, soon became known; no lessening of the general distaste for French administration is noticeable.

The security position in the Bekoa is bad, and with the forthcoming departure of the British occupying forces in that region public order may be seriously menaced. The collection of arms in South Lebanon by British and French forces has met with some success.

The last regular convoy left for France on 12th September and apart from those who embark on the "gleaner" ship no more Frenchmen will now leave. The Free French seem inclined to over-rule all British objections to Frenchmen remaining without rallying, and so far some 1,500 such have been allowed to remain, doubtless in the hope that they will eventually rally.

4. *State of the Alawites.*

The French délégué obtained a consignment of 40 tons of wheat from Syria and a promise of a further 15 tons a day, but this does not allow for storage of winter stocks nor for the supply of seed. However, this temporary arrangement has kept the area fairly quiet.

The arrival of a fresh S.S. officer at Latakia is welcomed, as his predecessor had been a trouble.

5. *Relations with the French.*

The removal of Capt. Moron from his work in the Beirut port was finally obtained.

When local press gave only a resumé of the Prime Minister's speech and omitted important references to Syria, the correct text was obtained and given to the French officer concerned. So far, however, the speech has not been adequately published and this is being insisted on.

At Damascus a proper translation of the speech appeared in the press, for the attitude there is less suspicious. Mention has already been made of the order from Damascus to S.S. officers that they should keep in close touch with British military commanders. An S.S. officer is also to be stationed at Beirut, partly with a view to facilitating our liaison.

[E 7437/62/89]

No. 40.

Sir M. Lampson to Mr. Eden.—(Received October 18.)

(No. 1004. Secret.)

HIS Majesty's Ambassador presents his compliments to His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and has the honour to transmit herewith a copy of telegram No. 315 (Saving) of 14th October, 1941: Syria, Weekly Reports.

Cairo, October 18, 1941.

Enclosure in No. 40.

General Spears to Sir M. Lampson.

(No. 315. Saving.)
(Telegraphic.)

Beirut, October 14, 1941.

Weekly Political Summary.

1. Food Supplies.

News of further German advances in Russia has checked the return of confidence, and hoarding is again prevalent: cultivators are less inclined to sell and others who have stocks are keener to retain them. Action taken against hoarders has not been effectively carried out.

Arrivals at Aleppo of wheat from the Jezireh fell off slightly as the result of movements of transport to Deir ez Zor following troubles in that area.

A further distribution of 1,000 tons of wheat and flour in the Lebanon has been decided on, and some British officials have arrived to supervise distribution of this and of other supplies. The propaganda effect of the last distribution in British lorries has been most satisfactory.

For further commodities the situation is unchanged. Sugar and rice are scarce, and fruit, vegetables and meat are also very dear in most centres.

2. Syria: Damascus.

On 4th October the Syrian Government made its expected declaration of policy. The circumstances precluded any elaborate programme, and its reception was cool. The Government had another quiet week in which to consolidate, but there are rumours of troubles to come when Ramadan ends. The friendly reception given to the independence news in Iraq, and still more so in Egypt, has been helpful. The United States Government has made representations to General Catroux reserving all previous rights and ending with an intimation to the effect that the present position in Syria could not be regarded as final.

The new Government has published new laws placing legislative powers in the hands of the Council of Ministers and making the Council answerable to the President.

Wheat supplies remain the main anxiety of the Government and anxious discussions are proceeding.

3. Aleppo.

The new Government is not considered to have so far done anything to earn respect; all French officials and services continue to function as hitherto.

The fear by unarmed villagers of raids by Arabs, especially the Aneiza, who still have even machine guns, is making them hesitate to cultivate as much ground as usual.

A Turkish guard escorted some of Rashid Ali's previous supporters across Syrian territory and tried to oppose even the co-operation of a British or French escort.

4. Homs and Hama.

The mild boycotting at Homs of the Proclamation of Independence on 27th September was previously mentioned. It appears that at Hama its reception was much worse, and that of some 300 notables invited to the function only 1 attended, and he probably only did so in order to report on the affair. The Syrian Governor of Hama has resigned, and it is hoped that a more active man will be appointed, as hostile propaganda and ravitaillement are urgent problems in both towns.

5. Jezireh.

No fresh incidents were reported in connexion with tribal troubles south-east of Deir ez Zor. Sheikh Ramadan Shallash was allowed back to fetch his family from Deir ez Zor, which he has again left for salaried banishment in the Lebanon. The Anglo-French Commission is about to proceed to the area to work under a Syrian President.

6. Jebel Druze.

The protracted delay over a decision on the future of the Druze Legion and the shortage of equipment are having a depressing effect on the morale of the men. The number who are expected to choose service with the T.J.F.F. is decreasing.

Colonel Olive, the délégué, continued to show much cordiality to the Emir Hassan, who for his part was obviously puzzled and somewhat suspicious of the real meaning of this change.

7. Alaouite Territory.

No information has been received.

8. Lebanon, Beirut.

General Catroux has continued consultations with Maronite leaders, but still appears uncertain as to how to proceed. The odds on M. Alfred Naccache remaining in power are thought to have lengthened.

The high cost of living has brought about a number of small strikes in various organisations, such as the Socony-Vacuum, for increases of salary, and Lebanese Government employees are becoming most impatient at the delay in announcing increases in their salaries.

Considerable excitement has been caused in the Chouf area by Free French demands for the surrender of arms held by the population, as it is held that the number of arms asked for from certain villages is far too high and that the imposition of fines, which has been threatened in case of non-fulfilment, will be unjust. It is also claimed that Druzes and Christians have been treated on the same footing, whereas the former are far more heavily armed. The matter has been referred to the Free French.

The batch of prominent merchants arrested on 8th September for alleged illegal association and hoarding of rice have still not been tried, and some of them are still in prison without bail. The initially favourable effect of their imprisonment is now being replaced by a feeling that they may have been unjustly treated, as it is generally believed that the military court has received orders to convict at all costs, even though the charge cannot be sustained.

[E 6874/62/89]

No. 41.

Sir M. Lampson to Mr. Eden.—(Received October 28.)

(No. 953.)

HIS Majesty's Ambassador presents his compliments to His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and has the honour to transmit herewith a copy of telegram No. 265 to Mideast: Syria and the Lebanon: Weekly political summary.

Cairo, October 7, 1941.

Enclosure in No. 41.

General Spears to Sir M. Lampson.

(No. 265. Saving.)
(Telegraphic.)

Beirut, September 30, 1941.

Weekly Political Summary.

1. Food Supplies.

WHEAT arrivals from the Jezireh have been much more satisfactory, and recently about 500 tons a day have been reaching Aleppo by train and lorry, but the onward transport is complicated by a change of railway gauges and by shortage of trucks.

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The temptation to smuggle abroad has been checked by the fall of Turkish and Iraqi prices to the Syrian level.

Supplies of Syrian wheat will not, however, suffice for the needs of both States. Arrangements for the import from abroad of substantial quantities of wheat and flour are therefore being made. Some 2,500 tons of imported flour have been distributed to rural districts in the Lebanon, and a further 1,000 tons will shortly be distributed to institutions, schools, &c. A quantity of 700 tons of Australian wheat imported from Palestine is being held in stock in Beirut to meet possible emergencies.

Substantial quantities of sugar, rice and coffee have also been imported.

Prices generally have shown a tendency to fall.

This problem has in recent weeks been the most important political as well as economic one, but, if the present improvement continues, it may not again have to feature first in political summaries.

2. State of Syria: Damascus.

The new President, Sheikh Taj ed Din, has nominated his Cabinet, which started work on 21st September. With nine members it is larger than any recent Syrian Cabinet. Its main strength is thought to lie in the reputation for honesty of the Prime Minister, Hassan Bey el Hakim, and in its close relation with the Shahbandar party, whose chief representative, Zeki Bey el Khatib, is Minister of Justice. The wide regional representation of the Cabinet, which includes the Jebel Druze, the Alouites, the Jezireh and Homs areas, should also increase its influence. Aleppo is, however, not represented, and this is said to be due to the feeling in that town that the Government may not last long nor have any real power.

The inclusion of Faiz el Khoury as Foreign Minister was a surprise, as he is a Nationalist; his appointment is probably due to the need of including a Syrian Christian as well as to the hope of dividing the Nationalists.

The important Ministry of Interior is taken by Bahij al Khatib, but he has apparently only agreed to serve till the new Administration gets into its stride.

On 27th September the new President was installed with due ceremony, and at the same time the Declaration of Syrian Independence was read by General Catroux. The proceedings passed off satisfactorily but without any marked enthusiasm.

Opinions as to the length of life of the new Government differ. Some say that it may well survive a long time if it is helped with the solution of the ravitaillement problem. Others are of opinion that the first demonstration will see it fall. It is nevertheless interesting that the Kitla has, up to the present, been unable or unwilling—probably the latter—to stage any manifestations against it.

The food situation has somewhat improved and published assurances and decrees have restored some confidence.

3. Aleppo.

The week was uneventful. The announcement of the formation of the new Syrian Ministry was received calmly, not to say coldly. As has been already stated, leading local men were unwilling to participate. The only one from Northern Syria included in the Cabinet is a landowner of no particular importance.

Communications with Turkey still present problems. The Taurus express runs regularly, but travel is held up by the fact that visa arrangements are not yet settled. On the other hand, further restrictions have proved necessary regarding telephonic and postal censorship. The opening of a German consulate at Alexandretta has emphasised the necessity for more precautions.

4. Jezireh.

The situation continues to be unsatisfactory in the Deir ez Zor area. The French seem to have done little, if anything, to settle the trouble of a month ago between the Fed'an and the Walda tribes near Raqqa. More than twenty villages of the latter tribe are in ruins and the inhabitants in great distress.

On 18th September a company of Syrian troops advanced on the village of Musalakha, north of Abu Kemal, and were fired on, suffering some casualties. The French proposed to bomb from the air, but were restrained. On 22nd September the French, who had withdrawn to the Abu Kemal immediately after the incident, arranged for the tribesmen concerned to hand over 100 rifles

as a fine and first instalment was delivered. Subsequently, however, a sheikh was, it is reported, killed by a French officer and the position has worsened.

A joint Anglo-French Commission has gone to examine the situation on the spot.

5. Jebel Druze.

Little confidence is felt in the new Government and it is apparently thought that the Atrash family were unwise to commit their support to Sheikh Taj ed Din by agreeing to the appointment of Abdul Ghaffar Pasha as Minister of Defence. However, a strong delegation is planning to go and congratulate the new Government.

Some resentment is felt at the order of General Catroux controlling the price of wheat in the Jebel without consulting local authorities. The control figure of £S.15 a ton is so far below the actual price of £S.22 that the order probably will not be enforceable.

6. State of the Alouites.

As Minir Abbas has been given a place in the Syrian Cabinet, as Minister of Works and Posts, the release of his brother Chawkat Abbas, the former Administrator, may be expected. The lawyer Naufal Elias is still imprisoned in Damascus, the allegations that he was an Italian agent not having yet been withdrawn.

The Alouite territory is specially hard to provision at this time when the civil motor transport is scarce, for no rail approaches the area. Supplies are arriving slowly but some stocks are wanted before the road from Aleppo becomes difficult.

7. Lebanon Republic.

No further development in the political future of the Lebanon has taken place. The French appear uncertain regarding their future policy, as well they may, for the whole problem is a complicated one, on which Lebanese, Christians and Moslems have divergent views.

The high cost of living, which shows little signs of abating, continues to form a major subject of criticism amongst the population. It was announced on 26th September that increases of from 60 per cent. to 120 per cent. in the salaries of officials in services depending from the Délégation Générale have been approved, but similar increases for officials of the Lebanese Administration have not yet been announced.

8. Relations with the Free French.

The "Gleaner" ship sailed on 26th September with the final contingent of Vichy adherents. There was some discussion regarding the retention of 70 members of the Gendarmerie and of 2 S.S. Officers, but they all finally left.

The immediate agreement by the Free French for a joint Commission to investigate the trouble at Abu Kemal was satisfactory.

[E 7221/62/89]

No. 42.

Sir M. Lampson to Mr. Eden.—(Received November 5.)
(No. 976.)

Weekly Political Summary.

HIS Majesty's Ambassador presents his compliments to His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and has the honour to transmit herewith a copy of telegram No. 290 saving of 8th October, 1941:—

Cairo, October 12, 1941.

Enclosure in No. 42.

General Spears to Sir M. Lampson.(No. 290. Spears. Saving.)
(Telegraphic.)

Beirut, October 8, 1941.

*Weekly Political Summary.*1. *Syria: Damascus.*

Since the pronouncement on 27th September of the Proclamation of Syrian Independence, the situation has remained quiet. Local reports seem to show that the neutral elements who go to the side of the winner are tending to identify themselves with the new President, and from the country districts he has fair support because his name is associated with a programme of public works.

It is understood that the Syrian Government is drafting a declaration containing presumably its terms of acceptance of the unilateral proclamation of General Catroux.

Speculators are still causing a rise in the cost of vegetables, rice, and other necessary foods and this brings discontent with the Allies as well as the Government.

Hostile propagandists have caused alarm by spreading rumours that the British intend to impose conscription for our own purposes. Steps have been taken to counter this.

2. *Aleppo.*

The refusal, in this second city of Syria, of all leading men to join the Government is quoted as proof of its universal unpopularity, it is said that in the history of Syrian politics this is the first case of refusals of ministerial posts when invitations have been given by political associates.

A number of active members of the Arab National party were arrested on 28th September for having recommended hostile propaganda.

Wheat situation continued to be easier and some 600 tons arrived daily from the Jezireh. Local demands at Aleppo have been supplied recently by confiscated stocks of undeclared wheat.

3. *Homs.*

The newly appointed délégué, Colonel de Essars, read the Proclamation of Independence on 27th September. Members of the Nationalist bloc absented themselves from the ceremony and by an apparent mistake some Christian clerics were excluded; otherwise a fair reception was given to the new Government.

A report has been received from French sources of a strong pro-Axis speech by Shukri Quwatli to Homs supporters of the National bloc.

4. *Jezireh.*

The tribal unrest by Deir ez Zor continues to be serious. The murder of Sheikh Kassar of the Agaidat by a French S.S. officer, having become known, the original settlement was broken and more incidents followed of which an affray at Megadine on 29th September was the most serious; this was stopped by a British patrol. The joint commission returned from the area to report. Sheikh Ramadan Shallash, who had recently been allowed by the French to return to Deir ez Zor and who assumed a leading rôle against them, has now come to Beirut for consultation. Pending his return, the tribes are remaining quiet.

Tewfik Bey Chamieh has returned to Deir ez Zor to reassume the position as Muhafiz from which he was removed in August; he had failed to satisfy the French when they first took control and his return to his post now is welcome.

5. *State of the Jebel Druze.*

The proposed delegation from the Jebel under the leadership of the Emir Hassan left for Damascus to congratulate the Government as soon as the Proclamation had been announced at Soueida on 27th September. Though the French délégué has not ceded any of his previous powers to the local authorities, he has shown increased cordiality to the Atrash family and has indicated that his functions are now more of an advisory nature.

The question of the disbandment of the Druze Legion has not been settled pending consideration of another possible solution.

Tax collection is reported to be proceeding satisfactorily.

6. *State of the Alaouites.*

The French are stated to have formed a commission to examine the relations of this autonomous state with Syria. There is some apprehension in Damascus that this may indicate an effort to widen the gap between the Alaouites and the Syrian Government, rather than to bridge it.

Naufal Elias, the lawyer who had been in solitary confinement in Damascus for over a month, has been released and is to live in southern Lebanon. He had been arrested near Lattakia by a Vichy official and it was felt that the main reason was his previous support of the British.

7. *Republic of Lebanon.*

The Free French authorities have now started discussions with the Lebanese authorities preparatory to making a declaration of independence of the Lebanon on the same lines as in Syria. The two most favoured candidates for the position of head of the State are the present Chef du Gouvernement, M. Alfred Naccache, and the unsuccessful candidate at the 1936 presidential election, Maître Bechara Khoury; the odds are slightly on the former, who has shown himself to be honest and docile. Apart from those politicians who are hoping for office, the population is still more interested in the Ravitaillement than in any future change in the status of the Lebanon.

Some 2,500 tons of Canadian flour were distributed in three days by British military lorries in the mountain regions, producing an excellent effect and showing the population that somebody was really attending to their welfare.

There is a distinct downward tendency at last in prices generally, and it can at least be said that the continuous rise in the cost of living which has taken place since our arrival has been checked.

On 26th September General Catroux signed a decree laying down that the Mixed Courts in the Lebanon need no longer sit with a majority of French judges. The measure was obviously due to the scarcity of French judicial personnel, but it seemed to give away rather lightly the rights which foreigners have derived from the former Capitulatory régime. This question is under consideration.

There was a mild mutiny amongst certain Free French colonial troops near Saïda on 2nd October arising out of questions of pay. A further sweep for arms was carried out by the French in the Chouf area on the same day and a number of villages were instructed to produce stated quantities of arms, the figure for which seems to have been put rather high.

[E 7439/62/89]

No. 43.

Sir M. Lampson to Mr. Eden.—(Received November 13.)

(No. 1013.)

HIS Majesty's Ambassador presents his compliments to His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and has the honour to transmit herewith a copy of a note from General Spears addressed to the Minister of State enclosing a report by Lieutenant-Colonel Gardener on the formation of the new Syrian Government.

Cairo, October 22, 1941.

Enclosure in No. 43.

General Spears to Mr. Lyttelton.

(Secret.)

Dear Minister of State,

Headquarters, Spears Mission,
Syria and the Lebanon,
October 11, 1941.

I SEND herewith an interesting report prepared by Lieutenant-Colonel Gardener, Political Officer at Damascus, dealing with the formation of the new Syrian Government. Colonel Gardener describes the negotiations which led up to the choice of Sheikh Taj ed Din el Hasani as President and to the formation of a Ministry almost entirely composed of Moderates and Independents based on a wide regional representation.

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In Colonel Gardener's opinion, the leaders of the National bloc are so imbued with pro-Axis sentiments that their inclusion in the Ministry, even if they had wished to co-operate, would have been undesirable, and the present Government is probably the best under the circumstances. It can hardly be called a strong or popular one, and the choice as President of Sheikh Taj ed Din, who is generally regarded as a puppet of the French, is perhaps hardly a happy one. But if the Ministry tackles the immediate problems of *ravitaillement* and of a general overhaul of the administration, it may attain a certain measure of stability.

Much will depend on the line taken by Shukri Kuwatli and his followers. At present they seem to favour a policy of waiting on events and their future actions will be governed by their estimate of the course of the war. If there is a prospect of an early return of the Germans, they will no doubt take active steps to embarrass the Government, and there are indications that Shukri Kuwatli has recently been telling his followers to be prepared to act on these lines.

At the end of his report Colonel Gardener raises certain questions regarding Great Britain's recognition of the new Government in Syria. I have already raised these points in my Louis No. 41 and Spears No. 266, and I am now awaiting instructions.

Yours sincerely,

E. L. SPEARS.

Sub-Enclosure in No. 43.

Notes on Sheikh Taj Government.

Background.—The three big political issues in Syria are (a) the desire to achieve independence, (b) the hatred felt for the French connexion, and (c) vaguely developed ideas of pan-Arabism. All politically-minded Syrians are united in these three desires, and the only differences between the various Syrian parties (which may perhaps be regarded as personal followings of the various leaders) are—

- (a) The methods of achieving independence, and
- (b) With which other Arab State Syria will seek union or federation.

Although there are many political parties, they tend to fall into two main groups, viz., Istiklal (Independence) party and what can be termed "Moderates" for lack of a better word. The credo of the Istiklal party since January 1941 (when von Hentig visited Syria) has been, and still is—

- (a) Germany will win the war.
- (b) Germany is opposed to France (the hated mandatory) and to France's Ally, Great Britain (the protector of Jews in Palestine).
- (c) Germany will not permit Jewish penetration in Syria.
- (d) Germany has promised independence to all Arab States, including Syria.

Therefore the policy of the party is to collaborate with the Axis (meaning Germany, for the Italians are despised by the Moslems), though some of them do not desire an Axis victory. The leader of this party is Shukri Kuwatli, who is now the most prominent figure in Syrian political life. His party is the best organised and most closely knit group in Syria. There is no doubt that this party has accepted Axis money in the past and is still in close contact with the Axis. Until this party can be convinced that the Axis is not going to win the war, it is therefore a potential danger to the internal security of Syria.

The Moderates are composed of Shahbandarists, Sheikh Kamel Qassab's party and Independents. The first named have, since the murder of Dr. Shahbandar, been badly organised, but have remained the bitter opponents of the Nationalists and persisted in their leader's traditional friendship for Britain. Sheikh Kamel Qassab is a fanatical religious leader of the Midan quarter of Damascus who is neither pro-British nor pro-French, but bitterly anti-German and anti-Nationalist. The Independents are the small group supporting individual leaders. As can be inferred, the Moderates are ill-organised, very loosely knit together and essentially fissiparous. They have, however, the advantage, from the Allied point of view, of being anti-Nationalist and anti-Axis.

Conditions governing Choice of Government.—The problem facing the French in implementing the policy of independence was to form a Government with the following qualities:—

- (1) Readiness to accept, at least for the duration of the war, a measure of independence falling necessarily short of complete independence.
- (2) Readiness to collaborate loyally and positively with the French in all war-time measures concerning the economic stability and internal security of this country.
- (3) Loyalty to the Allies in the event of an Axis attack.
- (4) Readiness to take over the administration of the country when everything, especially *ravitaillement*, was in a most precarious position.
- (5) Command sufficient support to be able to govern without too obvious foreign support.
- (6) To be as legal a Government as possible in the light of the Syrian Constitution.

Course of French Negotiations.—For a period of about three weeks General Catroux conducted negotiations with practically all the Syrian political leaders, but failed to keep His Majesty's Government informed of the results. His first approaches were made to the Nationalist party, and especially to Hashem el Atassi, the last President of the Republic, and Jamil Mardam, Prime Minister in 1936. The general doubtless thought that, by forming a Nationalist Government, he would placate the most hostile party and, since the last legally constituted Government (1936) was Nationalist, he would be able by manipulation to secure a greater appearance of legality.

His negotiations revealed that Hashem el Atassi, as all the Nationalists of note, was under the control of Shukri Kuwatli. The party demanded either the recall of the 1936 Parliament or fresh elections. When the new Government had been formed, Parliament (so Jamil Mardam said) would vote itself out of existence.

Such conditions were unacceptable for the following reasons:—

- (1) The old Parliament elected in 1936 had a Nationalist majority and does not represent present-day conditions.
- (2) Elections in Syria under war-time conditions would be dangerous from the point of view of public order.
- (3) Since the Nationalists are the best-organised party and probably in possession of Axis funds, there is little doubt that the Nationalists would return to power, though with a reduced majority (i.e., Shukri Kuwatli in control).
- (4) It is, as long as Syria is threatened by the Axis, inadmissible that the Syrian Government should be controlled by Shukri Kuwatli.

General Catroux's negotiations with the Nationalists provoked a sharp reaction in "Moderate" circles. The defalcations and swindles of the last Nationalist Government are not forgotten. Furthermore, the feud declared against them by the Shahbandarists as a result of the alleged complicity of certain Nationalists in the murder of Dr. Shahbandar aroused such resentment during the course of the negotiations that the Moderates (though in the minority) might have made orderly parliamentary proceedings impossible.

General Catroux, impressed by this strong reaction, then decided to treat with the Moderates and found them more malleable. They declared themselves willing to accept a limited form of independence and did not wish the recall of Parliament or any other form of "legality." They appear, however, to have asked for, and to have been promised, the limitation of the powers of the special service officers and advisers. The Moderates were thus chosen to supply a President and a Government.

Partly owing to French mistakes in Syria in the past, and partly to the oriental conception of politics, political leaders in Syria are limited in number, "professional" by qualification and mostly anti-French (and in some cases anti-democracy) in outlook. The choice of President and Cabinet was therefore very restricted, and the problem was not rendered easier by conceit, egotism and jealousies of the Syrians, which induced some suitable candidates to refuse office on the grounds that the post offered them was not commensurate with their dignity.

Eventually, after a process of elimination, Sheikh Taj ed Din was invited to become President of the Independent Syrian Republic by a letter addressed to him by General Catroux on the 16th September, and in his reply, dated the

same date, the sheikh accepted the responsibility and agreed to form a Government. After considerable difficulty, he formed a Government acceptable to himself and to the French. The composition of this Government was announced on the 20th September. This was followed on the 27th September by the official Proclamation of Syrian Independence.

Composition of Taj ed Din Government.—The principles underlying the formation of this Government are—

- (a) That it is a non-party Government.
- (b) That to stress Syrian unity the principle of regional representation has been more widely applied than in any previous Government.

As proof of its non-party character, it should be observed that two Ministers are Nationalists, one Shahbandarist, one a civil servant, while the others have no party affiliations.

As regards its regionalism, the Alouites, Druses and the Jezirah are represented by Ministers for the first time. Unfortunately, Aleppo is not represented because suitable candidates from that town would not accept office.

Reaction to Grant of Independence.—This great political step passed relatively unheeded and certainly without enthusiasm. The reasons for this indifference would appear to be—

- (a) The grant of independence had been discounted in advance on account of the manifold French and British promises.
- (b) Independence had not been achieved as a struggle carried out by any political party, and therefore was not so highly prized.
- (c) It is regarded by many as another French promise which will be broken.
- (d) Others question the legal validity of the proclamation, as it was made by Free France, which is not regarded by the Syrians as a legally constituted Government and the legitimate successor of France, but as a band of rebels.
- (e) The restrictions hedging the grant of independence are criticised by others.
- (f) The attention of many people has been distracted from the question of principle to the subsidiary question of the people who are called upon to implement it.

Most thinking people on both sides, however, seem to have come to the conclusion that, under present circumstances, Syrian independence must be of a restricted nature. Their suspicions of the sincerity of French promises are to a certain extent lightened by British association with the proclamation. If formal British recognition of Syrian independence is given at an early date it will be of great importance to the Syrian public, and therefore to the stability of the present régime.

Reaction to the Sheikh Taj Government.—As was expected, no enthusiasm has been displayed anywhere for Sheikh Taj's Government, but, on the other hand, its assumption of office has nowhere provoked disorders. In the general opinion, since he has French, and probably British, support—at least for the moment—it is useless to attack him. Most people are therefore reserving judgment until the question of Allied (and especially British) support becomes clearer, and until they have had a chance to judge the Government by its deeds and misdeeds. The Nationalists, disappointed at losing the prize which seemed about to fall into their hands, are naturally furious, but have so far decided to refrain from openly attacking the new Government, though they are doing what they can to discredit it by spreading rumours that (a) it is a puppet French Government, (b) it intends to introduce conscription, and (c) the events of Deir- ez-Zor (much exaggerated) show the impotence of this Government.

Regionally, the greatest support for the new Government is displayed in Damascus, the Sheikh's home town and the place where the Shahbandarists and Sheikh Kamel Qassab are strongest. The fanatic Moslem towns of Homs and Hama are strongly Nationalist, and therefore anti-Government, and the same tendency is also manifested in Aleppo, where Axis propaganda has taken stronger hold than in Damascus.

But in the minds of the people their interest in the new Government is entirely overshadowed by the *ravitaillement* problem—and especially the question of bread. It is on this point that the future of the present régime turns. If it provides plentiful and cheap bread, there seems no reason why it should not remain in office, for the Nationalists, unless they have a genuine grievance such as this, will scarcely be strong enough to attack it.

Allied Policy.—If it be conceded that the Sheikh Taj Government is the most suitable one in present circumstances, then it should receive the outward and visible support of the Allies as soon as possible. The new State (subject to any reserves that His Majesty's Government may wish to formulate) and the new Government must be formally recognised. For the British, recognition would entail the nomination of a diplomatic agent accredited to the Syrian Government. For the French, it would entail the change of title of their present representative in Syria from that of "delegate" to some more diplomatic form.

This support should take the following form:—

- (1) Formal recognition of the new State (subject to any reserves His Majesty's Government may wish to formulate) and of the new Government by Free France and by His Majesty's Government.
- (2) Nomination of a British diplomatic agent accredited to Syria. It is suggested that he should be styled "His Majesty's agent and consul," to avoid future difficulties. There is no reason why he should not work within the framework of the existing Spears Mission.
- (3) The French to signify recognition by changing the title of their representative in Syria from "delegate" to some diplomatic style.
- (4) The French to restrict the functions of their special service officers to purely those of intelligence officers. In the same way, the powers of the advisers should be restricted.
- (5) It may be possible, without endangering control, to make other concessions to the Syrians in the administrative sphere.
- (6) But most important of all, as explained above, is the great need of Allied support in the question of bread. In this the French can give assistance internally and the British both externally and internally, as policy may dictate.

It is suggested that the attention of the Syrian Government should be directed to the economic and administrative spheres, where much can be done to ameliorate the situation of the country without arousing political enmities. The possibility should also be studied of granting loans to the Syrian Government for the purpose of ensuring cheap bread and of carrying out a programme of public works.

A. J. G.

Damascus, October 7, 1941.

[E 8036/62/89]

No. 44.

Office of the Minister of State to the Foreign Office.—(Received December 5.)

THE secretary to the Minister of State presents his compliments to the Under-Secretary of State, Foreign Office, and is directed to transmit herewith a copy of a political report on Syria and the Lebanon during the month of October.

Cairo, November 20, 1941.

Enclosure in No. 44.

Political Report on Syria and the Lebanon during the month of October.

General.

OCTOBER passed without any disturbances of importance, though there had been much talk of the likelihood of troubles, as soon as Ramadan ended, to protest either against Taj-ed-Din and his Government or regarding food shortage. Some improvement regarding both these matters is recorded later in this report.

Possibilities of trouble, however, remain serious, for arms as well as problems and agitators are numerous.

Syrian Government.

2. The Government under Sheikh Taj has succeeded in some measure in consolidating its position. So far there have been no overt signs of dissatisfaction and it would seem that the population are getting used to it.

On the 4th October the expected Declaration of Policy was made to the Syrian public explaining that, in the absence of Parliament, the nation must itself assume some of the latter's functions, especially as the mouthpiece of public opinion. The programme announced by the Government was naturally uninspiring, as circumstances do not allow of radical reforms. In consequence, the programme met with a somewhat cold reception from the critically-minded Syrians.

By the suspension of the Syrian Constitution the chain of authority has been broken. To remedy this defect two laws were enacted—the first placing legislative powers in the hands of the Council of Ministers, while the second made the Council of Ministers jointly responsible to the President for the execution of general policy and individually responsible to him for the administration of their respective departments. These laws provoked the criticism that Sheikh Taj was trying to turn Syria into a totalitarian country, but after the first few days no more criticism was heard.

Recognition of Syrian Government.

3. Among the first countries to take action regarding the recognition of Syria was Egypt. Warm telegrams of congratulation were exchanged between the two countries, which, as it subsequently transpired, were intended to constitute official Egyptian recognition of Syria's independence.

Turkey, on the other hand, adopted a very cautious attitude, for on the instructions of his Government the Turkish Consul called privately on the Syrian Minister for Foreign Affairs, informing him that, while his country desired and desires Syrian independence, it feels that it cannot at present recognise the new status conferred on Syria by the Allies without compromising its neutrality.

Ibn Saud has not made his position clear.

On the 15th October the American Consul-General at Beirut wrote a private letter to the Syrian Minister for Foreign Affairs saying that, although America in principle viewed Syrian independence with benevolence, yet there were various technical reasons connected with America's treaty position which prevented America from officially recognising it. Unfortunately, the letter continued, present circumstances did not lend themselves to a detailed examination of these questions and therefore American recognition had to be withheld for the present.

Owing to these manifestations of caution on the part of other Governments and to the delay in Great Britain's own recognition, the Syrian Government began to feel despondent regarding their future, especially as their opponents expressed the belief that British recognition would never be forthcoming and that, in consequence, Syrian independence and the Sheikh Taj Government had no firmer basis than General Catroux's promise—he being only the local representative of the de Gaulle movement, which, in addition to being distrusted as being French, does not enjoy the prestige of being a regularly constituted Government.

It was in this atmosphere of gloom and depression that on the 28th October a telegram of congratulation arrived from His Majesty King George VI to Sheikh Taj. This telegram, couched in most cordial language, had a profound effect on the President, the Government and the Syrian population. That evening the President summoned the Damascus press and had the telegram read to them in English (the original text), French and Arabic. Speeches were made in honour of the occasion and adequate publicity was given to the proceedings in the vernacular press.

The next morning General Spears, attended by the Political Officer, Damascus, and the senior officers of the Spears Mission, Beirut, paid a formal call on the President and the Syrian Government to congratulate them on Syrian independence. General Spears's speech was published in every paper, as also the President's reply. That evening, however, the President asked the political officer if some signed document would not be forthcoming as proof of British recognition. The President argued that, while he and his Government did not doubt the sincerity of the British attitude, yet for the completion of their archives some signed document was necessary. He added that General Catroux had given him a signed copy of his Declaration of Independence of the 27th September, and he felt that there should be a British counterpart.

Iraq Relations with Syria.

4. Since the advent to power of the Nouri Said Government, the Syrians have been disturbed at the absence of cordiality in the relations between the two

Governments. The Syrians, who consider themselves as the centre of the Arab world, thought that Iraq would be the foremost to congratulate them on their newly attained independence. Instead, there has been no sign of recognition and, indeed, a disturbing coldness. The Syrian President's telegram to the Amir Abdul Ilah to congratulate him on the occasion of the Aid-al-Fitr remained unanswered, while in reply to the Syrian Minister for Foreign Affairs' telegram to the new Iraqi Minister for Foreign Affairs the latter sent (in his private capacity) a very guarded and cold reply to his Syrian counterpart.

The President remarked to the political officer that Nouri Said has always worked for unity between Iraq and Syria, and he fears that Syrian independence may be regarded by Nouri Said as an added obstacle to the plan. Another cause of suspicion in Syria is the recent visit to Iraq of the Amir Abdullah of Trans-jordan. As reported later, the Syrian Government has reason to be suspicious of the latter's ideas regarding Syrian independence and the combination of two Hashemite Princes with Nouri Said is regarded as definitely ominous.

The President has on two occasions stated that he looks to His Majesty's Government to secure Iraqi recognition of Syria.

Damascus and the Hauran.

5. The commandeering of buildings in Damascus has been a sore point, especially that of the main Moslem school, which was built during Taj-ed-Din's previous time in power. Actually there is a real dearth of suitable accommodation for military purposes.

A meeting on the 27th October, the anniversary of the murder of Dr. Shahbandar, was attended by the President and an urgent plea for the retrial of those suspected was made to him and the French representative.

The situation in the Hauran is giving the French and the Syrian Government great cause for anxiety. General Collet told the political officer that the situation there now is exactly the same as that which preceded their last troubles in the Hauran. For some time past, even in Vichy days, there has been talk of a separatist movement in that province, and it seems as if the position is becoming progressively worse. While exact figures and information are not available, there seems no doubt that this year's harvest has been considerably under standard, with the result that people, burdened with debt from former bad harvests, claim to be unable to meet their debts and to pay their taxes. To make matters worse Syrian troops have been sent to collect grain under pressure for the Lebanon—a method whereby the villagers have to feed the soldiers and their horses, thereby increasing their economic embarrassment. Public security also has been far from good—highway robberies being fairly frequent, while telephone lines are repeatedly cut. Unfortunately, these turbulent people are well armed with rifles left behind by Vichy troops or looted from the Allied forces.

Political troubles are also not absent, for the Hauranis, already dissatisfied with the French régime, are extremely discontented to see them return and reassume their former offices and functions. To them, the declaration of Syrian independence has brought no hope, but rather the reverse. The Hauranis have always considered themselves the victims of the Damascus effendis and merchants and see in the creation of an Independent Syrian Government a means whereby this state of affairs will be perpetuated, especially as there is no Haurani member of the Government.

It is in these troubled waters that the Amir Abdullah has chosen to fish. Early in October he arrived at Irbid and summoned various Haurani notables to come to see him—presumably to encourage separatist tendencies. His messengers are in frequent touch with Syrian notables not only in the Hauran but throughout Syria. He even sent a letter to the President in which he said that he, the Amir, was displeased that the President (whom he regarded as his friend) had accepted office, thus blocking the way to the Amir becoming King of Syria. The Amir contended that Sheikh Taj should have agreed to become "Head of the State," only, i.e., the rank enjoyed by his immediate predecessor, Khalid-el-Azm.

The Syrians are extremely apprehensive of the Amir's activities. The Government naturally wish to avoid troubles which would threaten their position, and the Nationalists see in them a movement threatening their ideal of a united Syria. All (including the French) unite in blaming the British, some arguing that the Amir is acting at British instigation; others affirming that, as he is a British puppet, the British must favour his intrigues.

French suspicion of undue British interference in Syrian affairs was raised when three principal tribal leaders, including Sheikh Mudj'hem of the Fedaan,

went to visit Colonel Glubb. It was, however, made clear that, contrary to rumour, Colonel Glubb had not invited them to visit him, but that their summons had been the work of an unauthorised messenger.

Aleppo.

6. Local notables maintained their attitude of non-co-operation with the Taj-ed-Din Government. General Catroux, during a visit to that town, urged the necessity for co-operating in building the structure of Syrian independence if later on a suitable place there was expected, but leading men have remained sceptical of the genuineness of the new independence and hostile to Sheikh Taj-ed-Din. It is reported that M. David, the French délégué, has not done all he should to improve matters and that this is due to personal unfriendliness with General Collet, who has always been the main backer of Sheikh Taj.

There has been no real shortage of food at Aleppo, yet prices have risen considerably and considerable discontent has been caused by the harsh way in which the searches for any stocks have been carried out and by the bad treatment inflicted in prison on suspected hoarders or profiteers before trial. Protests brought some improvement.

Homs and Hama.

7. The main annoyances in the area have been the machinations of Nationalist politicians and the spread of fifth column rumour. At times it is not easy to distinguish one from the other. The people generally remained unenthusiastic about Syrian independence.

Colonel des Essars, the new délégué, has begun his work creditably and energetically, particularly in regard to having no nonsense with monopolisers of wheat. He has succeeded also in stimulating a somewhat dormant Syrian Administration into action regarding the distribution of wheat.

In this specially fanatical area British-French relations have been good and there have been fewer complaints against the behaviour of Imperial troops.

Jezireh.

8. On the 1st October the Brigade Commander at Deir ez Zor succeeded in collecting and addressing a number of the sheikhs who have been involved in the affrays during the previous two weeks. About thirty men of French forces had been killed in two encounters with the Agaidat tribe. As the result of the meeting the tribes were convinced of the Allied solidarity, and the very considerable gathering of armed tribesmen dispersed within the prescribed period of two days, on the understanding that the British, in conjunction with the French, would make a careful enquiry and punish those at fault.

Ramadan Shallash, who had taken a leading part in the most recent trouble, was sent in to Beirut and was only allowed back to Deir ez Zor for a few days to collect his family to join him in forced but comfortable exile in Beirut.

Following discussions at Beirut between General Auchinleck, General Wilson and General Catroux it was decided that the matter should be investigated by a joint commission. The Syrian Minister of the Interior was named president; Brigadier Clayton headed the British representation, with Lieut.-Colonel Ditchburn, who has now assumed duty as area liaison officer at Deir ez Zor, as next senior. General Collet was in charge of the French representation. This commission met at Deir ez Zor on the 25th October, and after three days' investigation decided that twenty ringleaders should be banished and a fine of 335 rifles imposed on the Agaidat. A Syrian official was to make this demand in November, supported by a mixed force under British command. The French délégué has been moved from the district and the S.S. officer who murdered Sheikh Kassar has been dismissed from that service and sentenced to sixty days' confinement. The question of *état de siège* remains unsettled.

There were three inter-tribal raids in the northern part of the Jezireh; though the Agaidat affair had doubtless upset a very large area, these later affrays were not a direct result. One raid came from over the Iraqi frontier and British and French frontier officials were meeting to settle it: in future it is proposed that a Syrian official should take part in such frontier discussions.

Jebel Druze and the Druze Legion.

9. Full agreement over the disbandment of the Druze Legion by the Disbandment Committee was reached on the 22nd October. Implementation of

the agreement, however, still waits for approval of the proposed rates of pay, allowances, &c., from Force H.Q. The delay is unfortunate and is having a detrimental effect on the morale of the men, who for more than three months past have been kept in a state of uncertainty about their future. According to the agreement now reached, men will be given the choice of: (i) Returning to civil life; (ii) joining the Groupement Druze; (iii) joining a new unit to be known as the 'Druze Regiment' (Transjordan). The French during the past few weeks have without doubt been employing considerable propaganda to persuade the men to join their own unit. It is difficult to estimate the percentage that will choose service with the new Druze Regiment, but it is unlikely now to be more than 50 per cent., i.e., 550-600 men.

There had been recent talk of a political union between the Jebel and the Hauran, but any chances of this faded as a result of cases of brigandry when aggressors from the Hauran attacked Druze. Two of the latter were killed on the 17th, and, as efficient steps to trace the offenders had not been taken, demonstrations of protest were staged throughout the Jebel on the 24th, the important 7th day of mourning. Mischief-makers had obviously taken this opportunity of a show of power to impress the Syrian Government and to weaken the authority of the Emir Hassan. The usual technique of embarrassing the French by rumours of lack of British support was also used. However, no incidents occurred, and, as energetic action was then taken by the Syrian Government to arrest the suspected Hauranis, dangerous feeling died down.

The Emir Hassan is trying to obtain the relaxation of French control that he was previously promised. The main points at issue are the appointment of French S.S. or intelligence officers in places other than Suweida and the continuance of their bodyguard or Gardes Mobiles.

Lebanon-Beirut.

10. Throughout the month General Catroux was engaged in consulting Lebanese Ministers and politicians regarding the future status of the Lebanon. He was soon convinced that, a declaration of independence having been made to Syria, a similar declaration must be made for the Lebanon, less because the Lebanese desired independence than because they did not wish to appear to be receiving less consideration than the Syrians. He examined, but appears to have abandoned, the idea of a nominated consultative assembly in favour of a slightly enlarged nominated Government, on the same lines as in Syria, to carry on until such a time as the position warranted a return to the Constitution. His choice for Head of the Lebanese State finally fell, as was generally expected, on the upright, Jesuitically-minded and generally-respected head of the present Lebanese Government, M. Alfred Naccache. The choice will be mildly approved throughout the country, except by those with actively pro-British sympathies, who find M. Naccache too docile a tool in the hands of the French. The choice of a Head of the Government, who must, by tradition, be a Sunni Moslem, since the Head of the State is a Maronite, seems to be between Ahmed Bey Daouk and Abdallah Bey Beyhum, the former of whom has the better chances, but the latter of whom would be more acceptable to us as being readier to collaborate and with a less pro-Axis past. There has been considerable jockeying for position amongst the various groups, but outside the ranks of those actually hoping for office the population have shown little enthusiasm for their forthcoming independence.

The Free French have shown no signs of any intention of relaxing their hold on the Lebanon, and recent public utterances of General Catroux and the private remarks of his officials suggest a determination to preserve France's position in the Lebanon at all costs. The Lebanese Government now possess a powerful weapon for coercing the population through their control of the distribution of essential commodities, and the widely-spread view that all British influence will disappear at the end of the war is tending to persuade the population, despite their inclinations, of the desirability of reinsuring with the French lest they shall be made the object of the many kinds of petty victimisations which are already being practised on those who have shown too marked a preference for the British since our arrival. This undoubtedly explains the scenes of apparent enthusiasm which greeted General Catroux during his recent tour of South Lebanon. There is nevertheless no sign that the Free French are achieving any greater degree of fundamental popularity, nor of any lessening of the general desire that the country shall finally become part of the British sphere of influence.

Apart from a few acts of banditry in outlying districts, there has been no disturbance of public order during the month. The British Security Mission have started a methodical clean-up of the suspect elements in the country, and

the arrests so far made were comparatively well received when it was realised that the British authorities themselves were undertaking them.

The measures taken by the Free French authorities to repress profiteering and hoarding have given rise to much discontent. A decree signed by General Catroux in July made all offences of this nature justiciable by the military courts, but the law which these courts had to administer was in practice unworkable, and a number of savage sentences allegedly based on insufficient evidence caused the Merchants' Association to threaten a general closure of shops in Beirut unless the existing legislation was improved and the sentences modified. Particular objection was taken to the habit of imprisonment before trial of the merchants accused. A new law is, however, in process of promulgation, and the courts seem to be working more reasonably, so the threatened strike has been averted.

Wheat Supplies.

11. At the beginning of October the Syrian wheat situation showed a tendency to further deterioration, due partly to the progressive effect of general hoarding, and due also to the impression created by the rather unfavourable news on the Russian front.

A meeting was therefore convened on the 14th October, at which, under the chairmanship of General Spears and in the presence of the British and French economic representatives, it was decided to put the Minister of State's plan of action, that is to say, 40,000 tons of wheat were to be imported by the 15th December, of which 30,000 were intended as an accumulated reserve, while 10,000 were available for distribution; 3,000 tons of this quantity were to be made available as seed wheat for the Alaouite and South Lebanon districts. Special stress was laid on the fact that the wheat must be available in the country and divided up among warehouses in Syria and the Lebanon, so that no doubt as to our intentions should be possible.

The first boat arrived on the 30th October and 1,200 tons were unloaded. The plan and this first positive result of our activities were given a certain amount of publicity, and resulted in an easing of the market situation.

Two cargoes of flour totalling 2,350 tons also arrived, and were placed at the disposal of the Lebanese Ravitaillement for distribution, in addition to the wheat supplies up to the 15th December.

During the month under review the first group of economic officers arrived and took up their duties in the country. Inspection tours and contacts were made in Beirut, Beirut district, Homs, Hama, Aleppo, Damascus and Tripoli district.

Although conditions observed were in general reasonably satisfactory in these districts, a certain amount of abuse was observed, and the necessary steps are being taken to bring about an adjustment.

The Commission mixte d'Achat was able to purchase 6,010 tons of wheat in October, which were distributed mainly in Syria.

In general it can be stated that the position at the end of October was more favourable than at the beginning of the month, and that energetic action on our part will bring about further improvements in the future.

Relations with Free French.

12. The last contingent of the Vichy French left at the end of September, and the Free French had in consequence time to concentrate on the organisation of their administration in October, especially as the month was uneventful on the whole. A number of their less efficient or less friendly officers were moved, and quite satisfactory instructions were, after discussion with this mission, issued to S.S. officers regarding their relations with the British. General Collet at Damascus circulated to French officials in Syria still more definite orders for co-operation. In reply to a special enquiry addressed to all posts, it was reported that relations between British and French troops had recently been fairly cordial and no incidents of any import are known to have occurred. Among officers there has naturally been more friendly contact.

A number of more senior and experienced French officials, whose efficiency and loyalty to the Allied cause have been clearly proved, considered it, however, incumbent on them to protest against the undue amount of power wielded by junior and inexperienced officers who show little keenness for the Allied cause. This protest, which was being made direct to London, and of which copies have been forwarded to the mission, was not, it is believed, inspired by motives of personal jealousy, but was the outcome of genuine concern regarding the future of the Free French Movement.

Suspicion of the British seems to emanate from French Headquarters, where any recognition of the British position is liable to be reduced as much as possible. Instances in October were the reluctance to give proper publicity to The King's message to Sheikh Taj-ed-Din (when The King's photograph was also put in a French-controlled paper under a larger one of General de Gaulle), and the obstructive policy regarding British communiqués or news about British wheat supplies.

[E 8315/62/89]

No. 45.

Office of the Minister of State, Cairo, to Foreign Office.—(Received December 16.)

THE Secretary to the Minister of State presents his compliments to Under-Secretary of State, Foreign Office, and is directed to transmit herewith a copy of a record of a meeting between the Minister of State and General Catroux in Cairo on the 28th November, 1941.

Cairo, December 4, 1941.

Enclosure in No. 45.

(Secret.)

Record of a Meeting between the Minister of State and General Catroux in Cairo on November 28, 1941.

THE Minister of State received General Catroux at 5 P.M. on the 28th November.

Mr. Lyttelton said that a discussion on military matters had been arranged for 10 A.M. on the 29th November. The Commander-in-chief, Middle East, the Air Officer Commanding-in-chief, a representative of the Commander-in-chief, Mediterranean, and himself would attend. Military matters might be left over until then. Meanwhile, it might be useful to discuss certain wider questions.

Wheat.

Mr. Lyttelton observed that the accumulation of stocks would not by itself depress prices.

General Catroux said that he wished to assure Mr. Lyttelton that, contrary to what he feared was General Spears's impression, he could count on the complete support of himself and his subordinates in the execution of the plan agreed upon. Mr. Lyttelton said he had heard that 3,000 tons of wheat had gone astray. General Catroux replied that this had been a mistake. The 3,000 tons of wheat had been found by the French accountant appointed to look into the matter. There had been an assumption on the British side that M. Eddé was to blame, and Mr. Hugh-Jones had had a passage of arms with him in the matter. But, in fact, the 3,000 tons had never been missing at all. It had all now been cleared up.

General Catroux went on to say that the Syrians and the Lebanese needed most careful watching. He was afraid that, if the market were freed, the quantities it was proposed to place on the market might be bought up by hoarders and speculators. They were already talking about doing this. He thought they had sufficient financial resources to buy up to 60,000 or perhaps 80,000 tons. It would be essential to continue to sell through the municipalities.

Mr. Lyttelton agreed that it was the hoarder for profit who was to be feared. Unfortunately, there was likely to be a short delay in the deliveries which had been expected, some of which might not arrive until the middle of December or later. He was far from proposing to fling insufficient quantities of wheat against the barbed-wire defences of the hoarder. The proper procedure was to attack the market when it was weakest. It was not the possession of stocks, but the sale of wheat which would bring prices down. The question was one of judgment and timing. He concluded from what had been said that there was little difference of view between the English and the French side. He himself was perhaps in favour of an earlier attack on the market than others.

[23981]

British and French Policy towards the Arab World.

Mr. Lyttelton said that there was a fundamental matter of policy which he wished to raise. He would speak with the utmost frankness and hoped that General Catroux would do the same. In the note which General Catroux had communicated to him recently about the Declaration of Lebanese Independence he had used a phrase about the Lebanon being a "bridgehead" for the Western democracies in the Arab World. Great Britain was the largest Mahometan Power. It was an essential part of her policy that the Mahometan World should be peaceful and friendly. If the phrase in question became public property, or were known by enemy propagandists, the effect in the Arab World and in India, with its large Mahometan population, would be most serious. This was an observation he wished to make in passing. He wanted to go on to examine the wide issues behind. His Majesty's Government considered that the grant of independence to Syria and the Lebanon was the essential link which enable them to combine their policy towards the Mahometan World with their alliance with Free France. It was, unhappily, the fact that in the past British and French policies in the Middle East had diverged. The independence of Syria and the Lebanon was in their mind visible proof that this divergence had come to an end and that Great Britain and France were now working for the same end. They wished to be sure that there was no misunderstanding on the point and that the policy of Free France did, in fact, coincide with British policy. If they could be assured of this, minor difficulties would largely disappear and they could look to the future with confidence. The essential point was that the independence of Syria and the Lebanon must be real. His Majesty's Government had repeatedly recognised that France should maintain a pre-eminent position in Syria and the Lebanon over that of other European Powers. But the counterpart was real independence. Accusations were being made, as General Catroux knew, that the independence granted was a matter of form rather than of substance, that in reality nothing much had changed, and that under the cover of declarations and specially chosen Governments French domination was being riveted on the Levant. It was necessary for a new order to be substituted for the old régime.

General Catroux replied that he had used the word "bridgehead" in a military sense. We were at war. Opinion in the Arab World was not wholly friendly. If the Arab World should turn against us, now or in the future, and military action were required, the Lebanon was, in fact, a natural military bridgehead. But he assured Mr. Lyttelton that he was in agreement with the substance of what he had just said. To take the case of Syria, the French representatives attached to the Syrian Government no longer had a power to veto, and were only there in the character of advisers. It would be the same in the Lebanon. As an illustration he would mention that in the past the Maronites had always exercised a controlling influence over the Government and appointments. One of the reasons for which he had chosen M. Naccache as President of the Lebanese Republic was to show the Maronites that the old order under which their decisive influence was bolstered by the French was passed. They were angry with him for this, but it would be a salutary lesson. He could assure Mr. Lyttelton that the policy of Free France was to grant real independence.

Arab Federation.

As to the wider question of the future of the Arab World, General Catroux observed that he was not one of those who believed that Arab Federation in any ambitious form was a practical possibility for as far ahead as one could see. The most that could be done in the measurable future was to look for some form of closer economic ties.

Mr. Lyttelton said that he entirely agreed. The dynastic, geographical, social and other differences between the Mahometan countries were too great for any Arab Federation to be realised in the lives of ourselves or our grandchildren. The only progress that could be made was on the basis mentioned by General Catroux. He was glad to find that they were thinking on the same lines. It was most important that British and French policy on this question should be in concert. He thought it would have an excellent effect if it were known to be so. General Catroux then suggested that it might be valuable if some joint statement or declaration to this effect could be made. Mr. Lyttelton readily agreed and said that he believed that they could easily draw up such a statement between them. General Catroux agreed, but said that it would, of course, be necessary to refer the matter to General de Gaulle.

It was agreed to pursue the suggestion further.

Treaties with Syria and the Lebanon.

Mr. Lyttelton said that he would be glad to know what was in General Catroux's mind about the negotiation of formal treaties with Syria and the Lebanon.

The danger was present in our minds that if treaties were concluded or negotiations undertaken in present circumstances enemy propagandists would say that advantage was being taken of abnormal conditions to negotiate treaties with puppet Governments who did not really represent the people's wishes, and at a time when it was undesirable to hold elections.

General Catroux said that he entirely shared this view. In his declarations he had mentioned the conclusion of treaties, because such treaties were the condition on which immediate independence had been granted, but he thought it would be wiser to postpone negotiations until after the war. This was his personal view. He had had no instructions in the matter from General de Gaulle.

Mr. Lyttelton expressed his pleasure that they were in agreement.

Difficulties caused by the simultaneous handling of matters in London and in the Middle East.

General Catroux referred to the difficulties which had been caused in the drafting of the Lebanese Declaration by the fact that the matter was being handled simultaneously by His Majesty's Government and General de Gaulle in London and by Mr. Lyttelton and himself in the Middle East. He said that it had often been difficult for him to know where he was, and what text had been approved by whom.

Mr. Lyttelton entirely agreed, and said that he thought that the proper procedure was for decisions on major lines to be taken in London, but for decisions on detailed points to be taken between himself and General Catroux out here.

General Catroux agreed.

Relations between the British and Free French in Syria and the Lebanon; Vichy Officials.

Mr. Lyttelton said that reports reaching him showed that things were on the whole going well in Syria. Colonel Gardiner, who is now in Cairo, considered that collaboration between British and French officials in Syria was working well, with a few exceptions. It would not have been possible to say this a few months ago. He thought we could congratulate ourselves on the progress made. It remained to put things on an equally satisfactory basis in the Lebanon. What was General Catroux's view?

General Catroux said that he thought things were going quite well. He was not aware of any particular difficulties in the Lebanon. Perhaps on the military side there had been slight friction. He mentioned the name of Colonel Furlonge.

Mr. Lyttelton then mentioned the specific cases of M. David and Captain Moron. General Catroux expressed surprise that there should be anything against M. David. He himself was under the impression that he had been working loyally. He thought highly of him and was bringing him to Beirut. He would be glad to know whether there were any precise charges against him. Mr. Lyttelton said that he would pass on to him the information he had. As to Captain Moron, General Catroux said that in response to the request of the British naval authorities he had removed him from his position and had given him another post at Aleppo. When he had rallied to Free France he had been personally threatened by Admiral Gouton. He had no proof of his disloyalty. He was always ready to consider definite charges, but it was difficult for him to know what to do with Moron. He could not send back to Vichy a man who had burned his boats. The only alternatives to retaining him in Syria or the Lebanon were to send him to London or French Equatorial Africa. Mr. Lyttelton said that he appreciated this.

General Catroux remarked that the problem what to do with Frenchmen who rallied to Free France from Vichy was a delicate one. If the Free French admitted no recruits the Free French Movement would never grow.

On the other hand, there was always the risk of harbouring a hostile agent.

Office of the Minister of State to the Foreign Office.—(Received December 23.)

THE Secretary to the Minister of State presents his compliments to the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and is directed to transmit herewith a copy of General Catroux' speech and proclamation of Lebanese independence and M. Alfred Naccache's reply.

Cairo, December 12, 1941.

Enclosure 1 in No. 46.

Speech by General Catroux on the Occasion of the Proclamation of the Independence of the Lebanon.

M. le Président, Excellence, Messieurs,

DANS les fastes de l'histoire du Liban, un grand acte va s'inscrire, qui fera de votre Etat un Etat libre de ses destinées, un acte où se reflète de façon éclatante l'antagonisme radical entre les deux esprits qui, par-dessus la mêlée des armées, se disputent avec la victoire le sort de l'humanité.

Tandis que les forces de l'ennemi dépouillent les nations, les détruisent ou les asservissent, les forces alliées les respectent, les restaurent et les affranchissent.

Tandis que sur l'injonction du Chancelier Hitler, il s'établit en une ville de Provence la fiction d'un Haut-Commissariat de France qui prétend continuer à régir la Syrie et le Liban, le délégué de la France Libre proclame d'un geste spontané, que la Grande-Bretagne approuve, l'indépendance de ces pays.

En vérité, qui donc au Liban demeurerait insensible devant ce contraste ? Qui donc n'aurait pas choisi entre notre idéal de justice et de liberté et l'appétit de domination et de conquête qui dirige nos ennemis ? Quel est le patriote libanais qui n'embrasserait pas la cause des champions du droit des peuples et des hommes ?

Poser ces questions, n'est-ce pas y répondre ? Car l'instinct du peuple libanais est d'obéir aux lois positives de la raison en même temps que de céder aux entraînements du sentiment. Et raison et sentiment se conjurent aujourd'hui pour le guider vers ceux qui seuls veulent sa liberté et qui se battent pour le plus noble idéal, vers ceux qui derrière les drapeaux unis de la Grande-Bretagne et de la France Libre sauveront demain le monde et lui-même de l'esclavage et de la tyrannie.

S'il m'était venu de cela quelque doute, je n'aurais eu pour les chasser de mon esprit qu'à évoquer l'enthousiasme de tous les accueils qu'en tous les lieux du Liban les populations m'ont faits lorsqu'elles acclamaient en moi l'un de ces soldats, lorsqu'en ma personne aussi elles saluaient la France, la vraie France qu'elles chérissent et honorent, celle qui ne renonce pas, qui est fidèle à sa gloire et à sa fierté et au nom de laquelle je vais les proclamer libres et indépendantes.

Proclamation du Général d'Armée Catroux, Commandant en Chef, Délégué général et Plénipotentiaire de la France Libre au Levant.

Libanais,

Une proclamation que je vous ai adressée le 8 juin dernier au nom du Général de Gaulle, Chef de la France Libre—et que la Grande-Bretagne, notre Alliée, a appuyée par une déclaration particulière et simultanée—a reconnu au Liban, sous la garantie d'un traité à conclure en vue de définir les rapports réciproques franco-libanais, la qualité d'Etat souverain et indépendant.

Dépositaire de la tradition libérale française et soucieuse de faire honneur aux engagements contractés envers vous, la France Libre a voulu que son premier acte en entrant au Levant fût, en dépit de la guerre, en dépit de l'état d'exception qu'elle impose, un acte d'émancipation. Elle vous a rendus libres et indépendants. Vos aspirations sont satisfaites.

Il s'agit maintenant d'organiser votre indépendance. En ce qui me concerne, deux devoirs tutélaires m'incombent.

Le premier est de remettre le soin d'installer et de diriger le nouveau régime à une personnalité hautement qualifiée, dans la conjoncture présente, pour accomplir cette tâche nationale délicate. Après de très larges consultations qui

se sont adressées à la fois aux hommes et au sentiment public sur toute l'étendue du territoire, j'ai discerné que le vœu de la nation libanaise désignait son Excellence M. Alfred Naccache. Je lui ai demandé de conserver le pouvoir, avec le titre et les prérogatives de Président de la République, et de gouverner par le moyen d'un Ministère qui sera responsable devant lui et au sein duquel sera assurée une juste représentation de toutes les régions et de toutes les confessions qui constituent la nation libanaise.

J'assure le Président Naccache, qui a accepté, ainsi que la communauté libanaise, de ma sollicitude et de mon entier concours.

Le second devoir consiste à définir dans son esprit et ses formes la collaboration à instituer entre le Liban et la France Libre, en attendant la conclusion d'un traité d'alliance et d'amitié.

En reconnaissant votre indépendance, la France ne fait que s'inspirer de son amitié traditionnelle pour le Liban, de sa mission tutélaire dans ce pays au cours des siècles et de la situation privilégiée qu'elle a ainsi acquise. Son aide et son assistance demeurent, en toutes choses, assurées au Liban, dans l'esprit du Traité franco-libanais d'Alliance et d'Amitié de 1936 qui a reçu l'approbation unanime de la population libanaise.

En outre, les circonstances de la guerre et l'occupation par les forces alliées du territoire libanais place, temporairement, le Liban dans une situation particulière.

Il en découle un certain nombre de droits et d'obligations dont, en particulier, ceux stipulés ci-après :

L'Etat libanais jouit, dès maintenant, des droits et prérogatives attachés à la qualité d'Etat indépendant et souverain. Ces droits et ces prérogatives subissent les restrictions qu'imposent l'état actuel de guerre et la sécurité du territoire et des armées alliées.

Par ailleurs, sa position d'Alliée de fait de la France Libre et de la Grande-Bretagne requiert une étroite conformité de sa politique avec celle des Alliés.

En accédant à la vie internationale indépendante, le Liban succède naturellement aux droits et obligations résultant de tous traités, conventions et actes internationaux conclus par la France en ce qui concerne le Liban ou en son nom.

Il a la faculté de désigner ses représentants diplomatiques auprès des pays où ses intérêts exigent une pareille représentation. Partout ailleurs, les autorités de la France Libre lui prêteront leurs offices pour assurer la défense des droits et intérêts du Liban, ainsi que la protection des ressortissants libanais.

L'Etat libanais a la faculté de constituer ses forces militaires nationales. La France Libre lui prêtera, à cette fin, tout son concours.

La Grande-Bretagne s'étant déjà engagée à plusieurs reprises à reconnaître l'indépendance du Liban, la France Libre interviendra, sans délai, auprès des autres Puissances alliées ou amies, pour que celles-ci reconnaissent l'indépendance de l'Etat libanais.

La France Libre considère que l'Etat du Liban constitue politiquement et territorialement une unité indivisible, dont l'intégrité doit être préservée de toute atteinte. Elle favorisera, en conséquence, le resserrement des liens politiques, culturels et économiques, qui unissent les différentes fractions du Liban.

De son côté et aux mêmes fins, le Gouvernement libanais garantira l'égalité des droits civils, religieux et politiques entre tous ses ressortissants sans distinction aucune. Il assurera une répartition équitable des différents éléments du pays dans les hautes charges et dans l'ensemble des emplois de l'Etat. Il assurera aussi, dans la répartition des dépenses d'utilité publique, une juste proportion entre les différentes régions. Il procédera, le plus tôt possible, à l'unification du régime fiscal ainsi qu'aux réformes administratives nécessaires.

La France s'engage à s'entremettre entre le Liban et la Syrie afin que soient recherchées et instituées les bases d'une collaboration économique entre les deux pays et que soient éliminées les difficultés que cette collaboration rencontre dans le présent.

Cette entente, entre deux pays frères et voisins, doit garantir les droits légitimes et respectifs des deux parties, et établir leur rapport sur la base de la confiance réciproque.

En vue de sauvegarder l'indépendance et la souveraineté du Liban et pour mener à bien la lutte commune, les Alliés assumeront, pendant la période de guerre, la défense du pays. A cette fin, le Gouvernement libanais mettra à la disposition du Commandement allié, pour coopérer à la défense du territoire, les forces nationales libanaises. De même, le Commandement allié disposera dès

maintenant, dans la mesure où les nécessités militaires l'exigeront, de l'équipement et des services publics du Liban, notamment des voies de communication, des aéroports et des aménagements côtiers. La défense du territoire exige également que l'étroite collaboration existe en tout temps entre le Général Commandant en Chef et Délégué général et les services de gendarmerie, de police et de sûreté de l'Etat libanais. Le Liban doit être, en effet, défendu en temps de guerre non seulement contre ses ennemis du dehors, mais aussi contre ceux du dedans.

En raison de l'inclusion du Liban dans la zone de guerre et dans le système économique et financier des Alliés, la plus étroite collaboration entre le Gouvernement libanais et les Alliés est également nécessaire pour assurer, pendant la durée des hostilités et dans l'intérêt commun, l'obligation et le respect de toutes mesures prises en vue de conduire à bonne fin la guerre économique.

Dans ce but, pendant la durée des hostilités, les plus grandes facilités seront accordées pour assurer, dans la plus large mesure, la liberté des échanges entre le Liban et les pays du bloc sterling. Le Liban, entré maintenant dans le bloc sterling, adoptera dans l'ordre économique et financier, et notamment dans le domaine du change, les mesures nécessaires pour rester en harmonie avec la politique générale du bloc sterling.

Les stipulations qui précèdent concilient le respect de l'indépendance et de la souveraineté du Liban avec la mission séculaire de la France et avec les nécessités de l'état de guerre. Elles sont dominées par la pensée de gagner la guerre et d'assurer, par ce moyen, au Liban, un avenir de peuple libre. Elles apporteront au problème franco-libanais une solution qui procède de la volonté de la France de ne pas retarder, malgré la guerre, l'accomplissement des aspirations nationales du Liban et l'exécution de ses propres engagements. Mais il est nécessaire qu'un règlement définitif y soit substitué au plus tôt, sous la forme du traité franco-libanais qui consacrera définitivement l'indépendance du pays.

Vive le Liban indépendant! Vive la Grande-Bretagne! Vive la France!

Le 26 novembre 1941.

Enclosure 2 in No. 46.

Speech of President Naccache.

Excellence,

AU moment où vous proclamez l'indépendance libanaise et me remettez l'honneur et la charge de l'organisation du nouvel Etat, mon premier devoir est d'exprimer, en même temps que la gratitude unanime du pays envers votre personne, les espoirs qu'il fonde sur la France et ses Alliés.

Interprète de la pensée libérale et généreuse de la France et de son esprit de justice, votre Excellence a voulu, simultanément avec votre noble Alliée la Grande-Bretagne, que votre premier acte fût un acte d'émancipation et qu'en dépit du régime d'exception imposé par la guerre et dont nous comprenons les nécessités, cette émancipation prit un caractère de réalité immédiate.

En attendant que les circonstances permettent l'établissement d'une convention réglant définitivement les rapports franco-libanais et le transfert au nouvel Etat de l'ensemble des attributs et des prérogatives de la souveraineté, votre Excellence, dès aujourd'hui, a tenu à donner aux Libanais les premiers signes tangibles de cette souveraineté: la représentation diplomatique et la constitution d'une force militaire nationale.

Par cet acte que couronnera la convention à intervenir et par tous les effets qui en découlent se trouveront remplis les engagements contractés par la France ainsi que sa mission au Levant. C'est l'aboutissement d'une grande tradition qui n'a de limites ni dans l'espace ni dans la durée, la consécration des liens noués entre nos deux pays au cours de plusieurs siècles d'histoire. Cette tradition, fondée sur l'estime et la confiance mutuelles, qui se concilie parfaitement avec le respect des droits du Liban et son indépendance, a été hautement proclamée ici même par le Général de Gaulle, à qui nous vous prions de transmettre l'expression de notre amitié reconnaissante.

Excellence,

Si j'accepte aujourd'hui la haute mission dont votre confiance et celle du pays me remettent la responsabilité, c'est que j'ai la certitude que les deux conditions indispensables à la sauvegarde de cette indépendance seront immédiatement réalisées.

Vous avez bien voulu tout d'abord nous renouveler l'assurance de la coopération française, en apportant au Liban la garantie du maintien de son unité politique et de son intégrité territoriale. La France a ainsi posé les bases et confirmé la première condition de la durée nationale libanaise.

La deuxième condition de l'indépendance relèvera de nous-mêmes. J'en appelle ici à la raison et au civisme de tous mes compatriotes. Cette indépendance sans laquelle il n'est pas de dignité sera nécessairement fondée sur l'union des Libanais. Intégrer à la communauté nationale toutes les familles spirituelles qui composent la patrie libanaise: c'est le constant objectif auquel nous devons tendre. Je suis persuadé que tous l'auront compris et qu'ils ressentiront de plus en plus la nécessité de renoncer aux luttes partisans, aux douloureuses et vaines querelles qui ont retardé l'accession du pays à une véritable existence d'Etat indépendant.

Aussi bien, mon premier souci sera-t-il de tout mettre en œuvre pour favoriser cette évolution de l'esprit public et pour fortifier la notion de l'Etat.

Le premier moyen est celui que votre Excellence a préconisé dans sa proclamation: assurer autant que possible, dans les institutions, la plus équitable représentation des régions et des communautés, les associer à la responsabilité de la chose publique, rendre leur participation à la conduite de l'Etat de plus en plus effective.

C'est ainsi que, si le régime de guerre ne permet pas au jeu normal des institutions de créer une représentation nationale, il sera possible d'y suppléer en désignant un Gouvernement qui aura en même temps un caractère représentatif et un pouvoir d'exécution et au sein duquel je veillerai à assurer, selon le vœu de votre Excellence, et en tenant compte des besoins d'une saine administration, le fondamental équilibre entre les communautés et les régions.

Par ailleurs la liberté individuelle et la liberté de conscience seront garanties et protégées. Nous en renouvelons la solennelle assurance.

Sur ces bases, avec l'assistance de la France et l'appui des Puissances alliées ou amies, et particulièrement l'aide de la Grande-Bretagne et sa libérale compréhension de nos nécessités politiques, j'ai le ferme et confiant espoir que l'Etat libanais accèdera à sa complète et effective indépendance.

Son sort demeure lié, dans les heures dramatiques que vit l'humanité, à celui de la libération française et de la victoire finale. Le jour viendra où, dans un monde arraché aux violences de la guerre, le Liban pourra, avec le concours de sa grande et généreuse alliée, accomplir ses destins et remplir sa mission dans l'Orient méditerranéen.

Vive la France! Vive la Grande-Bretagne! Vive le Liban!

CHAPTER III.—ARABIA.

[E 114/114/25]

No. 47.

Mr. Eden to Mr. Stonehewer-Bird (Jedda).

(No. 3.)

Sir,

Foreign Office, January 7, 1941.

THE Saudi Arabian Minister paid me a first visit this afternoon, when he said that he had received the previous evening a telegram from King Ibn Saud asking him to convey a message of personal friendship to me. Ibn Saud also wished to congratulate His Majesty's Government most warmly upon the victory at Bardia. All the Moslems, who were now on pilgrimage, would be earnestly praying for a final British victory. They knew how the Italians had treated Arabs in Tripoli and they rejoiced at the Italian defeats.

2. The Minister continued that he had a further message for me from Ibn Saud to the effect that, if at any time the King could assist us in our campaigns in Abyssinia through his influence with Mohammedans in the Harar area, he would be very glad to do so.

3. The Minister then spoke of the actual operations in the Western Desert. He wondered whether we were making full use of the Arabs for the desert part of the warfare. He felt sure that they would be only too glad to help by raids into Cyrenaica. I thanked the Minister for his message and said that I knew that Arab forces were being organised by General Wavell, and I had every hope that they were playing their part in the victories which we both welcomed so cordially.

I am, &c.

ANTHONY EDEN.

[E 1076/640/25]

No. 48.

Royal Legation of Saudi Arabia to Petroleum Development (Western Arabia), (Ltd.).—(Received April 22.)

(1)

Dear Sir,

London, April 21, 1941.

WITH reference to your letter of the 31st March, 1941, and our reply of the 1st April, in connexion with the decision of your company to relinquish the concession which it holds in Saudi Arabia, I have now received the reply of my Government agreeing to the termination of the concession on the 26th July, 1941, in accordance with the terms of the agreement.

Yours faithfully,

HAFIZ WAHBA.

(2)

Petroleum Development (Western Arabia) (Ltd.), to the Saudi Arabian Legation.

Excellency,

March 31, 1941.

WE have the honour to refer to the concession⁽¹⁾ held by this company from your Excellency's Government which, although terminated by us last year, was later renewed for a further year up to the 29th July, 1941, on special terms agreed with your Excellency's Government.

Your Excellency is probably aware of the unfavourable results of the geological, geophysical and drilling operations carried out by our staff working in the concession area during the past few years. In normal times of peace our company might have continued such exploration, in order to reach a final and conclusive opinion on the oil potentialities of the area, but during wartime it is impossible for us to carry out any such work.

⁽¹⁾ This concession was for a period of sixty years, and covered the whole of the Red Sea coast to a depth of 100 kilom., together with the Farsan and other islands and territorial waters.

We have therefore regretfully reached the decision that it would not be in the interests of either your Excellency's Government or of our company that we should retain the concession for further exploratory work as and when conditions permit, but that your Excellency's Government should be free to make other arrangements for its exploitation with interests that might be more favourably placed than we are to carry out the necessary work during the present emergency.

As we have no representative at present at Jeddah, we shall be grateful if your Excellency will be so good as to inform your Government accordingly, and, at the same time, convey our appreciation of the consideration and assistance shown to our company and its staff during the period of our operations.

We have, &c.

(For Petroleum Development (Western Arabia) (Ltd.),
J. SKLIROS, *Managing Director.*

[E 1766/114/25]

No. 49.

Mr. Stonehewer-Bird to Mr. Eden.—(Received April 28.)

(No. 10.)

Sir,

Jedda, March 20, 1941.

IN accordance with the instructions contained in Viscount Halifax's circular despatch of the 4th November, 1939, I have the honour to submit the following brief review of the situation in Saudi Arabia in 1940:—

2. Until the entry of Italy in June the war seemed to the Saudis very remote. The chances of the combatants were weighed; a few felt that Germany must win, the majority thought that neither side could win, and a minority, consisting mainly of King Ibn Saud himself, were confident of a final Allied victory. There were few, if any, who wished to see Germany win the war, there were many who rejoiced to see France and England, who, in their opinion, were holding down the Arabs in Palestine and Syria, take some bad knocks.

3. When France collapsed, public opinion veered round very sharply in favour of Great Britain. The French are unpopular with the Arabs, who compare the British policy of educating the populations under their protection and eventually granting them their independence, as in the case of Egypt and Iraq, with the exactly opposite system adopted by the French, whereby territories protected by France become slowly but surely absorbed, as have been Algeria and Senegal. There was much disappointment that, when the French authorities in Syria declared for the Vichy Government, His Majesty's Government did not immediately take over Syria and declare its independence. King Ibn Saud, the Amir Faisal and a few of the more intelligent understood the difficulty and delicacy of His Majesty's Government's position as regards Syria.

4. Whilst some may have favoured the Germans in the belief that the devil they did not know was better than the devil they knew, no Arab here has anything but hatred and bitter contempt for the Italians, and Mussolini's declaration of war turned many in Britain's favour. One of the effects of Arab contempt for the Italians has been to minimise the difficulties with which His Majesty's forces have had to contend in those theatres of war where Italian forces have been operating. The overrunning of British Somaliland did nothing to increase Italian, and little to diminish British, prestige. It was realised that this new territory was only of value to the Italians from a propaganda point of view—for they had merely acquired a port which they could not use and a population which they could not feed—without command of the sea.

5. Britain's cause has also undoubtedly been much helped by Italy's choice of representative in Jedda. Signor Sillitti has on more than one occasion mistaken arrogance for forcefulness in his representations to the Amir Faisal, who has, in consequence, a deep personal dislike for him. Italian verbal propaganda (Ibn Saud has prohibited all written propaganda) has also been particularly futile—a mixture of easily detectable lies and idle boasting. Arabs are not only amused, they are offended that so low an opinion should be held of their intelligence. The bombing of the Dhahran oil-fields, no less than the self-contradictory explanations of the incident, which Ibn Saud took to be meant as a warning to him to remain neutral, did not help the Italian cause.

6. The feelings and opinions of the population of Saudi Arabia matter little as far as the Government is concerned. There is no Government as the word is understood elsewhere. King Ibn Saud is the Government. He alone dictates foreign policy, paying little or no heed to the views of his chief counsellors, Yusuf Yasin and Khalid-al-Qarqani.

7. King Ibn Saud's attitude throughout the year has been admirable and, in spite of persistent rumours to the contrary, there were no indications that he was failing either in health or mental power. There can be no doubt either of his desire for, or of his confidence in, a British victory. He has made it clear in his conversations, in his letters and in his actions that he fully realises that his interests are identical with those of His Majesty's Government.

8. The first action which proved the King's genuine intention to loyally serve British interests was his refusal to allow Herr Grobba, ex-German Minister to Iraq and duly accredited minister to Saudi Arabia, to take up residence in Jedda, in spite of strongly-worded representations by Signor Mussolini. Although Ibn Saud asked for a British guarantee in the event of Italian action against him, he eventually expressed himself as satisfied with a reaffirmation of the assurances already given him that His Majesty's Government regarded his interest as their own. On the withdrawal from Dunkirk and on the collapse of France, the King sent messages of sympathy and expressions of his confidence in final British victory.

9. It is perhaps more by his attitude towards problems nearer home that the King has been of greatest value to His Majesty's Government. He stands almost alone in his sympathetic understanding of the difficulties which face His Majesty's Government in the matter of Palestine. Whereas the Amir Faisal and Sheikh Yusuf Yasin hanker for further declarations of British intentions after the war and for the immediate grant of a greater share for Palestine Arabs in the Administration, the King realises and has advised Arab statesmen in surrounding countries that present efforts must be concentrated on winning the war, and that it is the duty of all Arabs to refrain from any action which might impede Britain's effort. He has refused to consider joint action with neighbouring countries, a section of whose statesmen have thought that advantage should be taken of Britain's present difficulties to further Arab aspirations.

10. Though an economic survey is outside the scope of this review it is difficult, in a country which lives from hand to mouth and where, consequently, any departure from the normal has an immediate effect, to dissociate economic from political considerations. The reduced size of the 1940 pilgrimage placed the financial situation of the country in a precarious state and necessitated an appeal to His Majesty's Government for assistance. The loan by His Majesty's Government of £200,000 was eventually raised to £400,000, with a promise of a further £400,000 in 1941. The California Arabian Standard Oil Company advanced 3½ million dollars in 1940 and are being hard pressed by the Saudi Government to advance a further large sum in 1941. The 1941 pilgrimage was, thanks to the action of the Government of India and the naval authorities, larger than could reasonably have been expected, but it fell far below normal, and the revenue it produced was proportionately lower still owing to the total absence of the more profitable pilgrims—Javanese and Malays. In addition to loss of revenue, Ibn Saud had greatly increased expenditure on subsidies to his tribes, who he feared might grow restive if not convinced that the war had in no way lessened his strength and wealth.

11. The country was cut off, except in the Persian Gulf, from all sea communications for some six weeks after Italy entered the war and from communication with Egypt for about twelve weeks. The Italians were telling the world that they were in command of the Red Sea, and Saudi authorities and merchants were badgering the legation daily. They were inclined to place the responsibility—not where it lay, on Italy—but on British authorities, who should, they felt, run all risks in order to assure the well-being of the Hejaz and the profits of the merchants. When regular services to and from India and Egypt were established the Italian Legation explained the safe passage of British ships by stating that the Duce, in his love for the Moslems, was prepared to allow ships to proceed to Jedda unmolested. This statement was greeted with derisive laughter and an enquiry as to why no Italian ships had been seen in Jedda harbour. There has been no lack of food at any time, nor have prices increased as much as was expected, but Hejazis have been hard hit and in many cases reduced to beggary by the reduced pilgrimage. The Government has on several occasions distributed food.

12. Relations with neighbouring States were on the whole good. The old-time disagreement between Iraq and Saudi Arabia about members of the Nejd Shammar domiciled in Iraq was settled by Rashid Ali in King Ibn Saud's favour. The trade, *bon-voisinage* and extradition agreements with Koweit were put into force early in the year on an exchange of letters between His Majesty's Political Agent at Koweit and Sheikh Hafiz Wahba, though at the end of the year there

were still points of difference as to the final text and the agreements had, consequently, not been signed. Frontier incidents reported to King Ibn Saud in exaggerated and distorted form caused a few somewhat violently-worded protests against Transjordan officials, and there was a marked tendency on the part of Saudi Arabia to lay claim to territory which by any interpretation of agreements and by the reading of any map was well within the Transjordan frontier. Distrust of the Amir Abdullah is so deep-rooted in Ibn Saud that he will, it is feared, invariably take a biased view of frontier incidents, but, as he has frequently asserted, he will not allow his feelings for the Amir Abdullah to lead him to take any action which might embarrass His Majesty's Government.

13. I have sent copies of this review to the Government of India, to His Majesty's Ambassadors at Cairo and Bagdad, to his Excellency the High Commissioner for Palestine, to his Excellency the Governor-General of the Sudan, to his Excellency the Commander-in-chief, East Indies Station, to his Excellency the Governor of Aden, to the Hon. the Political Resident in the Persian Gulf, and to the Middle East Intelligence Centre.

I have, &c.

F. H. W. STONEHEWER-BIRD.

[E 5101/5101/25]

No. 50.

Mr. Stonehewer-Bird to Mr. Eden.—(Received August 28.)

(No. 32.)

HIS Majesty's Minister at Jedda presents his compliments to His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and has the honour to transmit to him the annual report on the heads of foreign missions in Jedda.

Jedda, July 30, 1941.

Enclosure in No. 50.

Report on Heads of Foreign Missions in Jedda.

France.

M. P. A. Ballereau was transferred to Jedda as minister in November 1938 after eight years as consul-general in Singapore. He began his career in Morocco, where he spent many years, and later he was chargé d'affaires at Tehran.

Until the fall of France, was anxious to co-operate with the British Legation and was embarrassingly loud-mouthed in his propaganda and his attacks on suspected defeatists. Since July 1940 has shown open approval of the Vichy Government's policy of loyal collaboration with Germany, in whom he states lies France's hope of regeneration. Generals de Gaulle and Catroux are, he loudly proclaims, traitors, who will be shot after the war. The Amir Faisal's view that he is mentally unbalanced is generally shared.

M. Ballereau is 61 years of age.

Iraq.

Jamil Pasha Ar-Rawi was appointed chargé d'affaires in November 1939. Served during the Great War first in Turkish army and later with his close friend Nuri Pasha As-Said in the Arab forces. Was principal military aide-de-camp to King Hussein.

An excellent colleague, whose views and speech have been most helpfully pro-British. Was absent on sick leave for most of the first half of 1941.

Italy.

Gr. Uff. Luigi Sillitti presented his credentials as minister on the 13th March, 1937. Most of his working life has been passed in the United States, where he held various consular posts. Came to Jedda from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. Educated partly at Grenoble, and speaks good French as well as good English. Had no experience of the East before his appointment to Jedda.

Before the war was a pleasant, if uninspiring, colleague.

He has, since Italy's entry into the war, acquitted himself most inefficiently of an admittedly difficult task in a country where Italians are universally disliked and despised. His vainglorious boasting, his tactless hoisting of his

flag at each Italian victory (notably Sidi Barrani and British Somaliland) and his aggressiveness in official dealings—an aggressiveness born not of Fascist training, but of natural weakness and timidity—have earned him not only the contempt but the active dislike of the Amir Faisal.

Netherlands.

Daniel van der Meulen has, owing to the internment in Holland of the titular chargé d'affaires, Dr. Dingemans, returned to Jedda, where, from 1926 to 1931, he was consul and later chargé d'affaires. He had just been promoted resident in the Dutch colonial service and is merely seconded for the duration of the war. He is an authority on the Arabic language and customs and speaks good English and French. He is a most loyal supporter of the Allied cause. His wife, who is said to have some Javanese blood, has great charm of manner and is most helpful in counteracting her husband's occasional tendency to pessimism. Four of their children are in Holland.

Turkey.

M. Saadullah Gören was appointed chargé d'affaires in 1938. Among the posts at which he served are London (where he learned little or no English), Tehran and Kabul. Speaks good French. Is a pleasant though not a very valuable colleague. He is ill-informed and indolent. His main interest is card games, for which he has great aptitude. He expresses pro-British and anti-Nazi sentiments. Has suffered severely this year from stones in the bladder and is unlikely to return after the long leave on which he is soon to proceed. Is about 60 years of age.

Representatives Accredited to other Governments and Resident Elsewhere. Afghanistan.

Sheikh Muhammad Sadiq-al-Mujaddidi is minister to Egypt.

Egypt.

Awad-el-Bahrawy Bey presented his credentials on the 14th April, 1940; is also minister to Iraq.

Iran.

Ali Akbar Bahman presented his credentials on the 30th January, 1940; is ambassador to Egypt.

United States of America.

Mr. Alexander Kirk has not yet presented his credentials; is minister to Egypt.

[E 8326/472/91]

No. 51.

The Governor of Aden to the Colonial Office.—(Received in Foreign Office, December 17.)

[WITH MAP.]

(Confidential.)

My Lord,

August 28, 1941.

I HAVE the honour to transmit for your Lordship's information a report submitted by Mr. W. H. Ingrams, C.M.G., on his recent visit to the Yemen. I think that you will agree that this interesting and eminently readable report throws new light on the situation in the Yemen and its leading personalities.

2. While it is doubtless true, as Mr. Ingrams himself points out in his report, that his favourable reception by the Imam was in some measure attributable to the collapse of Italian influence in East Africa, which had denied to the Imam his customary manoeuvre of playing off the one Power against the other, yet I consider that in dissipating many old suspicions and establishing relations of friendship and confidence with the Imam and his principal officers Mr. Ingrams not only rendered a very valuable service, but showed diplomatic gifts of a high order.

3. I am sending a copy of this despatch and enclosures to the Middle East Intelligence Centre.

I have, &c.

J. HALL, Governor.

Enclosure in No. 51.

Impressions of a Visit to Yemen.

SO many reports have been written about missions to the Yemen in recent years that I do not think it is necessary for me to add another in any great detail. So I hope I may be excused if in this brief, informal account I restrict myself rather to my own impressions and to saying something about things that I do not think have been much mentioned before. Becher, one of the most intelligent of the intelligence officers we have had in Aden, and whose death, in one of the very few air raids in which the Italians did any harm in Aden, was a great loss, once said to me that, knowing the people, one could almost write the reports of visitors to the Yemen before one read them: Freya Stark found an Italian lurking behind nearly every corner; Lake found Arab independence as the main preoccupation (and a more friendly feeling to the British than other travellers); Seager, the deepest of oriental intrigues. I have not re-read any of the previous reports, but before I went there my mental picture was rather a combination of all three, with Italian menace underlined by intelligence reports.

All these things do exist in the Yemen, but it struck me in a seven weeks' visit that there were many more things to be considered if one was to have a fair picture. Whether I have got a fair picture I cannot, of course, claim to judge, but I have often found the value of my own first impressions; so for what they are worth I shall give them.

Thinking back over my political predecessors on journeys to the Yemen, I believe I am the first to have travelled with a family. Of course, the bachelors, or grass bachelors, who went before me could probably make a very good case for single travelling. It all depends on the point of view, and because I give my own it does not mean I do not appreciate theirs. Families, one may say, impede one's movements. Mine did not, and appeared also to extend directly and indirectly my contacts. There was every reason to suppose that two small children, one 6 and the other 10 months, might be difficult to carry about, but not a bit of it. It was all "too easy." Most of the way cars went, and where they did not they were conveniently slung in boxes, small shaqdufs, on either side of a mule. They were in charge of muleteers, who took as much care of them as trained nurses, and to the tinkling of camel bells they slumbered peacefully over mountain passes and came to life when food was offering. I felt that taking them was good propaganda: all sorts of things have been said about us in the Yemen, and we have all featured in hostile broadcasts or press comments. Zahra, aged 6, has had a lot of comments made about her, and I was alleged to have kidnapped her and made her into a Christian. I noticed that she was regularly examined, and much astonishment expressed when it was found she knew the Fatiha, could read and write Arabic and English, and said Bismillah before her meals. My wife appeared in a new rôle. She had a reputation as a "beduin," but with two children caused surprised ejaculations of "Mash'allah Al 'Umm."

I had always gained the impression that wherever one went in the Yemen one was spied upon and one's movements restricted to the nth degree. Seager has told me tales of restriction and rudeness that made my blood boil, and I wondered if I should have the patience to put up with them.

Halali was the first to call on me at Taiz. He said: "The place is your place, go where you like, do what you like, you are welcome." Immediately he had left I went out for a walk, and straightway one of the guards followed me. I told Halali that I did not need any escort, that I knew I was safe anywhere in the kingdom and that I planned nothing that required restraint. That I was also a simple soul and my dignity did not require escorts. I had no more guards, and when I left Taiz I thanked Halali and said I now realised that all the tales I had heard of suspicions and restraints were untrue, and that I appreciated being trusted and that they could therefore trust me to do all I could to help when they wanted help. All the rest of our visit we had no compulsory escort whatever. Sometimes we asked for a guide or took Seiyid Muhammad, the head of the guest-house people, with us, but nothing was ever forced upon us, and we went where we liked and did what we liked. As absolutely none of it included anything to which anyone could take the smallest exception, I hope any restrictions of that nature are finished. Petrie commented on the readiness at which permission to visit places for which permission is required was granted. If it appears to others as it did to me, that I was better received than some others have been, it must be remembered that I was the first to visit the Yemen after the elimination of the Italians from the Red Sea.

Impressions of the Country.

To Taiz.—The sun was just climbing out of the sea when we slid down our hill on the start of our journey to Yemen. It seemed to me that we were carrying a lot of luggage, though, of course, there were a lot of us: D. and I, Zahra and Leila, Salih Jaffer, Zaidi and Milahi, not to mention drivers and odds and ends taking lifts. I hate Arabian travel with endless baggage, but one did not know what one was in for, and Seager had filled me up with accounts of the necessity of this and that and, not the least, of impressing the Yemenis. He knows them better than I, but I have never yet met Arabs who are very impressed with the ways of the Ferenji. So our turn-out and equipment was a compromise.

It was very pleasant breakfasting in our usual picnic haunt in the woods of Hussein, with the wood pigeons cooing and Leila seeing something green for the first time in her life, but we got stuck at the Wadi as Saghir, where the chocolate-coloured, tree-carrying flood of a just-arrived seil was roaring by. We went back to Hussein to wait for it to pass, and it fell about 2½ feet in four hours. Once across we made good going, and crossed the Wadi Akhan, also in spate. I had driven over this road before as far as Huweimi, but this is apparently a bit off the track, and I missed its leafy groves and hot-water springs, though I recognised the green hill of Kirsh near it. Shortly after we entered the Yemen—a little post in the middle of the wadi—the road blocked by an old piece of angle iron laid on a couple of piles of stones. We tea'd pleasantly and coolly by a pool into which a couple of waterfalls were emptying themselves. How much I appreciate the Arabs' delight in running water, green grass and pretty faces!

At Rahida customs, where the building was the first of a style new to me and which represented my mental picture of a roadside khan, 'Ali Ruheidi, the customs officer, received us most hospitably with good coffee, tea, and a meal of chickens, potatoes, eggs and bread. We had eaten our lunch at Hussein, but did him fair justice, and Zahra seemed perpetually hungry.

When we left it the country began to get more tree clad. The vegetation was still familiar, but it was as though troops in extended order had closed their ranks to close formation. When dark fell, the impression was strengthened, and as we climbed up and up, the road itself seemed green, and gnarled trunks spread their branches across it. The car's bright head lights—the first we had known for many months of war—gave glimpses of green and of people and houses and scores of little mice scuttling to safety. It began to rain as we approached Taiz; the lights of the castle and the guest house shone at us from some distance away. Thoroughly bumped and bruised over the 123 miles from Aden, it was a relief to know we had no further to go. The servants in their qamis and black waistcoats met us and we clattered into the stone-floored echoing hall and up the stairs into bedrooms full of beds (barrack cots), but little else. The reception-room had a long, narrow table, like that which used to be in Mukalla, and about a dozen very hard folding chairs. It was nice and clean, and reminded me of some small Levantine hotel out of season. I expected a Greek manager to appear. I had not then seen the lavatory and bathroom, and I never remember seeing worse outside the dirtiest tribesman's dar. We could not put up with the hard chairs, so took to the floor, and were immediately provided with comfortable farrashes and pillows, and were at ease.

Our dinner was bad European, and we then returned to the floor. Presently there was much bugling and later a band struck up, followed by women(') singing, and the programme ended with drums. Salih said this happened every night. It was interesting because it was different. We had not yet seen our surroundings and our background was Aden, but here, hidden in these inland half-unknown hills, was the echo of a 5th-century occupation which had ended more than twenty years before. Considering how fiercely these Arabs stick to their own institutions, it is curious the way they imitate and preserve something that stands for such a different system. Here the master's voice had been Turkish. In Mukalla it had been English, and when we first reached there seven years ago we heard bands and saw soldiers whose antics were a shabby imitation of things learnt in India and Aden. You can take it as an encouragement, if you like, that "modern" things can progress and be adopted by these people, but the fact remains that once the master's touch is withdrawn, any foreign life goes out of anything introduced, and what remains is only a moss-grown ruin. These people are not teachable, as are Africans. Africans may not be inventive, but they learn well and see the benefit of what they are doing. Not so with Arabs; even with introduced things that are necessary to them they are practically incapable of maintaining them.

(1) So I thought when I wrote, but they were men with falsetto voices.

Thus, though western firearms are treasured, there is not one in a hundred who bothers to clean his rifle. What is essential with them is very little, and life is too short to be bothered with anything but essentials.

It was fresh and delightful at night, especially after the light rain. Leila went peacefully to sleep and Zahra was full of life and quips at dinner—proud to be allowed to stay up. With all our large windows open, I soon fell into a dreamless slumber.

April 19.—I awoke early, much refreshed and with a gorgeous feeling of well-being and of holiday. Files seemed thousands of miles away, and I could happily have stayed all day in bed. Through one window I saw a castle perched high on a hill; through the other a lovely vista of hills with a nice-looking, yellow-stone building under construction below the guest-house. The style was very pleasant. The large arched doorway and upper and lower-storey windows with almost gothic arches above them. And everywhere was green: not the soft green of England, but darker. I did not know where Taiz was, but discovered it when I sat up. I found it most satisfying, with the perfect background of a corner of Jebel Sabr and its creamy mosques, minarets and domed tombs. I was surprised at its smallness and delighted with its gardens. People were soon about, and I am still trying to remember the place that the quality of the air recalls. The crisp crunch of shod feet on gravel, the clop of the horses', mules' and donkeys' hooves, the very sound of the coughs nagged at some reminiscence of an earlier morning in fresh mountain air where I could hear but not see the passers-by. What a lot of people seemed to be about, and how peaceful it all was. The general fertility made one wonder if it was that which made it easier for the Imam to keep order than for us in our barren deserts. I liked the dresses, mostly the Yemeni qamis and large turban, with crossed braces supporting ammunition belt. The soldiers carried rifles as well, the civilians wore sashes, and all had the short Yemeni jambia, with not so much of a turn to it as that of the protectorate or even 'Uman.

How I liked the untidiness of everything—this discarding of all the apparently non-essential! I thought how our work at Aden would improve if we had a decent and accessible hill station and immediately started to plan one at Dhala. Then I reflected how ghastly it would shortly be. The bottles that would arrive, the parties, the short-skirted women, the golf course and all the hateful insularity of some of the British in the colonies. All the nice untidiness would disappear and give way to trim gravel-laid paths and well-cut hedges. It made one thankful that here in this lovely corner of happy Arabia man seemed so naturally part of the landscape, untamed, like the vegetation and the rocks. God forbid that anyone should change the Yemen, save only the Yemenis! Some day, perhaps, they will hear the inner meaning of the extra summons they put into their call to prayer: "Come to the doing of good."

A lazy day. His Royal Highness the Crown Prince genuinely ill and his brothers, 'Abdulla of Hodeida and Al Hasan of 'Ibb, left to entertain themselves. With dusk came Halali, whom I had met before, with the most cordial of welcomes. A short stroll to see Jebel Sabr behind the house gradually wrap itself in night and then to supper; 'Ali Yahya and the news and thus to bed. Even the dog barking in the distance seems exhilarated. The band has stopped; hardly a light wink. Taiz goes to bed early.

Through the Tihama.

During the morning of our day's journey down to Mokha we passed through leafy lanes and splashed through streams, but before it was time to stop for lunch we had already got into a more familiar type of barren stony country, and once on the sandy maritime plain it was not long before we had our first indication of Mokha—a sight of the open-work steel structure of the deserted French light-house. When at last the town came in sight, my first thought was that it was less ruined than I imagined, for there seemed to be a respectable sky-line of tall houses. I thought of various Englishmen's descriptions of the prosperous town of the 17th, 18th and early 19th centuries, but when we reached it, it was a scene of desolation more depressing than any I had known, for one knew that for a 100 years not a load of rubble had been carted away. From the dozen or so once good houses still standing one could form some idea of what it had been like, for the houses had, so to speak, died in their tracks like the endless camels you see in various stages of corruption on Arabian paths, and, like the camels, it had simply been left to time, without the aid of vultures, to cover them up, and time had not finished the job. One wondered which had been the English factory which flourished from 1619 to the 19th century; the French and Dutch and all the rest. Where was the European cemetery?

Mokha must have an interest for an Englishman visiting these parts, not simply because of the coffee, but because it does represent a footnote, if not a chapter, in the story of the expansion by trade of our Eastern Empire. And, after all, the Englishman in the Yemen to-day does owe something to his predecessors. No doubt the fact that he is not regarded as a curiosity and is treated in friendly fashion by the country folk is due in part to them. Hogarth says that it was the just and prudent dealing of British representatives in Aden, Mokha, Zabid and Beit al Faqih which secured favour to Europeans in the Yemen. From all accounts, the mixture of foreigners, Indians and Arabs in Mokha got on well enough together, and when there was trouble the British seem to have stood up for their rights without ill-feeling afterwards. Mokha was bombarded by us at least once (and so, for a matter of that, were Zanzibar and Mukalla, amongst other places).

We walked round Mokha to see it all. As I say, nothing seemed to have been moved away—not even old guns which had fallen when the bastions below them crumbled away. It was easy enough to rebuild it and repeople it in fancy. There was a little life at the back of the town, where there were many huts and much modern filth. The few people we met were nice enough, except the 'Amil, who was the least friendly of those who entertained us on our journey. But he had not a chance to be at his best, for the real Amil was in jail, and the acting one was the town magistrate, and he had been ordered to confine himself to Government House (not his house) for some offence which he did not rightly know. Yemeni 'Amils, I suppose, commit so many offences that, unless they are told, they cannot possibly be sure which has been found out.

We were woken up by the Zeidi call to prayer just outside the house. Nothing is ordinarily more beautiful than the call to prayer, but I never heard a less harmonious noise than the Zeidi version—a chorus of cracked and falsetto voices all out of tune. We left while it was still dark at 4 o'clock, so as to be able to pass the Bight of Fajra. It was beautiful and fresh by the sea, and we bathed and breakfasted on boiled eggs and Taiz cheese, which had a pleasant taste of wood smoke.

We had only proposed to pass through Khokha, but though we got there before 9 we were compelled by the kindness of the principal inhabitants to stay for lunch, and a very good lunch they gave us. Khokha seemed out of the period. It is of modern growth and reminded me of one of the long villages like Iwana Mchangoni or Jambigani on the east coast of Zanzibar. The similarities were the white sands, the palms, the huts, the sea breeze and the breakers on the shore. We had a terrible time after leaving it and making inland for Zabid. The wind was at furnace heat and a dust storm was so intense that it hid all landmarks and tracks. Leila was a mass of prickly heat by the time the day was over.

I had, somehow, never expected the impressiveness of Zabid and Beit al Faqih. We did not stay long at the former town, and there was a good deal of dust blowing, but I was struck with the massiveness of the fortifications and the castle. Zabid is an ancient seat of learning and was in its day a famous spice market. It has four gates and gave the impression of being well arranged. We pressed on to Beit al Faqih and were lucky in the dusk to find the 'Amil and his party on donkeys with four hours before them to reach home. So we gave him a ride. He was a charming man, and earned our gratitude at Aden a few years ago for befriending the crew of an aeroplane which forced-landed.

We reached the town in the dark and were wonderfully entertained in the house of the principal merchant. The 'Amil and others stayed to supper, but we had the top storey of the house to ourselves and woke on the roof to discover that we were in about the middle of the town in one of its highest buildings. The House of the Sage, for that is the town's name, seemed to suit it. It was a lovely study in brown, built by artists who could make the best of the beautiful narrow burnt brown bricks of the Tihama. Possibly the association of thought is between "brown study" and scholar, but I should not have been surprised if Beit al Faqih, rather than Zabid, had been the university town. Indeed, Beit al Faqih is, apart from the bygone seiyid who gave it its name, better known for its old fame as a coffee market.

An hour or two brought us to Hodeida—I suppose the only real business town in the Yemen. Architecturally, it has really nothing to commend it and there is little length of history behind it. It started growing after the decline of Mokha. The narrow suqs are roofed with matting, and this is the only South Arabian town where I have seen this done. It seems sensible, and, though it is shoddy, it gives a pleasant feeling of mystery to the casual visitor. The old British Consulate has disappeared and the Ottoman Bank buildings, which had some really lovely decorated interiors, are now closed as dangerous.

The Road to Sana.

Historically, there is nothing much interesting about the motor road to Sana beyond 'Ubal, where the old track branches off over the mountains to Manakha. It only took us a few hours to reach this spot, and I was surprised that you could see Manakha and the heights of Shibam, one of the highest mountains in the Yemen, from it. The town of Bajil, 36 miles from Hodeida across the flat maritime plain, was mostly interesting to us as having been the scene of the imprisonment of Sir Bernard Reilly.

But if there was not any history to cogitate about on the motor road, nature made up for it, and the higher we got the more temperate became the colour of the vegetation, even of the grass. Nature, too, had certainly done its best to reassert itself in the matter of the road, which was undoubtedly the most ghastly track I have ever had to negotiate in a car. Once, indeed, we were caught in a seil and had to evacuate the car! It is astonishing what cars will stand; nothing surprised me more than that the car continued to function after the spate had passed. The most wonderful views opened up as we got higher, and on each side the high mountain ridges were capped with little white villages or houses. What a business it must be for the inhabitants to climb down and up on market days!

We spent our first night at a coffee shop at Dhahir in very primitive surroundings, but the host and his wife were friendly and talkative and we picked up a good deal of casual information about the life of the countryside from them and from other travellers. The next day we passed Hammam, interesting for its hot springs. In the distance it looked like a fair-sized village on the hillside, but on arrival we found the village consisted of booths, in which people camp during the season and take the baths. The Imam is having a special house built for him here and a special bath-house too. Just beyond it we had to go in for extensive road repairs, as a recent seil had washed great gaps away, which had to be filled in, and then we began the last immense ascent of Musna'a, on which we spent a bitterly cold and dewy night, though the children were comfortable enough in the car. Dawn and sunrise made up for the discomfort, and it was a wonderful sight to look down over the terraced hills and see the extraordinary pillar of Jebel Dhoran in the distance. I wonder if human foot has ever trodden its summit? Once on the top of Musna'a, over 9,000 feet high, the green of the plateau sparkled with dew on the cobwebs and somehow looked very Irish. We had a wonderful breakfast and bath at Ma'abar, the first town we had reached after Bajil.

First Impressions of Sana.

We caught our first glimpse of Sana from 6 or 7 miles away, partly hidden by a spur of Jebel Nuqum. We had driven about 35 miles over the great plain of Sana since ascending the pass of Naqil Yeslih. For the last hour or so rain had fallen steadily and it was bitterly cold, although by Aden time it was only 3 o'clock in the afternoon. The sky was overcast, and in the thundery light the brown of the great freshly-ploughed fields contrasted with the green of young barley and wheat. A pall of cloud hung over Sana, and its minarets and tall cypresses gave it in the distance the look of a town in the black country. Just so had we driven over rough roads and green fields in a pall of cloud and smoke to Salford on our way from Scotland three years before. Nothing less like my conception of Arabia formed in youth from books and confirmed by the last seven years of Arabian travel could be imagined. Nor was this non-Arabian feeling dissipated when we approached the city. As we passed by the cave-carved sides of Jebel Nuqum the clouds lifted and the sun shone forth on a great eastern city, it is true, but more Turkish than Arab. The pale minarets and the dark cypresses, slender and tall, both of them, seemed more of Syria than Arabia.

We were met at the Bab al Yemen by two well-mounted horsemen, and with them as our escort cantered round the crumbling earthen city walls past the well-built Turkish barracks to a little three-storeyed house in the Bir Al Azab. What the little house reminded us of we cannot remember, but it was nothing Arabian. A Swiss chalet; the cottage at Lady Halton; an Italian villa (this was mostly the curtains and decorations): there was something of all of these. And the garden! How can I write of a Sana garden in spring. Untidy, yes; but in it bloomed in wild profusion marigolds, marguerites, hollyhocks, carnations, dahlias, snapdragons, geraniums, irises (nearly over); a confusion of orange, yellow, red, pink, white, purple and blue. Along the walls grew rose bushes, quinces and peaches, while heavily-laden apricots pushing their dove-tinted shoots skyward gave shade through which the soft afternoon sun scarcely penetrated.

A dinner with fresh and succulent beans and a mountain of lettuces, tomatoes and endives and a pile of new picked apricots. Bed in a little low-ceilinged room with a warm quilt and an orange-curtained window through which came the cold refreshing mountain air. In the cool of the morning, woken by the soft rays of a temperate sun, the song of the birds and the creaking of water wheels. Breakfast of yaourts, best of breakfast dishes, fried eggs, fresh butter and bread, and more apricots. I wished that His Majesty the Imam would hold us here through all the hot Aden summer.

The City of Sana.

Sana is so well known and has been so much described that it is not worth mentioning much more than the features which had not struck me in previous accounts. One of the first Englishmen to visit it, Middleton, said that in size it was "somewhat larger than Bristol," and I suppose that was a natural enough thing for a West Country sailor to say. Once I was inside it, it seemed to me unique of its kind—the greatest Arabian city I had seen unspoiled by European influence, for the Turkish barracks and other buildings did not seem to spoil it, and they had added in the older period such lovely things as the Bakilia. Here, perhaps, is one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities of the world, and one that has plainly changed but little in more than a thousand years. The great cathedral mosque round which it centres is perhaps architecturally nothing extraordinary, but its high walls, built of great blocks of stone with its Kufic and Himyaritic inscriptions, were impressive in a forbidding way. The site once contained a Christian church and is peculiar for a mosque other than the Haram at Mecca for having in it a kaaba.

When one is at Sana itself the name does not include what elsewhere one regards as the whole city, for it is divided into three parts, and it is only this city portion that bears the name of Sana, the other two being called Bir Al Azab and Qa' al Yahud. The characteristic of the city is high brick-built houses of light brown, decorated with lines of white brick and not very foreign-looking to English eyes, as bricks of the size and colour seem to have been fashionable in parts of London and South-East England during last century. I discovered that most of the finest houses were the property of magistrates and other officials of some standing, which goes to suggest that justice is quite a paying commodity. Generally speaking, the merchants do not make such a splash with their houses, and the reason for this is fairly obvious.

The characteristic of Bir Al Azab is the houses standing in their spacious gardens. This is the residential quarter where all the best people live and owes its gardens and its pleasantness generally to Turkish enterprise. The houses are not pretentious, but are comfortable.

The third section, the Qa' al Yahud, is the ghetto. The characteristic is the lowness of the houses and the plainness of the exteriors. Jews are not allowed to build houses more than two storeys high, but in the Jewish houses we visited there was comfort and a great cleanliness. Generally speaking, the Jews are contented and acknowledge the security in which they live. On the whole, Palestine seemed to them something more real than it did to the Arabs. It is plainly a home to which many of them would like to emigrate if they were allowed. With the Arabs it is just an abstraction which can raise them to political fury, but in which they have no personal influence. Only one Jew, a very fine craftsman in silver, inveighed to me against the discriminatory laws between Jew and Moslem. Unlike some of the bigger merchants, he gave me the impression of being more actively interested in politics and seemed of the intellectual Socialist class. I think, on the whole, the Jews are probably proud of their side curls, and even of their black clothes, though they shed the latter fast enough when they leave Sana. The thing that upset my friend most was not being allowed to ride on his donkey through the City of Sana.

It was in the suqs of Sana that I found a never-ending source of fascination. There were whole streets of little shops in which men carried on the same business. There was the street of Jambia makers, where they sat endlessly polishing fresh blades or daggers. The place of the alabaster workers, the street of the blacksmiths, who were always ready to put up a show, when as many as four men swinging great hammers in time and singing the while would beat the sparks out of a bar of white-hot iron. There were the streets of the sandal-makers, of the dagger sheath-makers, of silversmiths—though the best of this work was to be seen in the Jewish quarter—of tailors and embroiderers, of locksmiths, of jewel polishers, of workers in brass; the grain market, where great sacks woven from black and white goat and camel hair were turned down to show

the golden corn, great sacks of raisins, sultanas, of walnuts and almonds; streets of carpet sellers, pawnshops, of booksellers; streets in which every little booth had golden apricots, purple plums and green apples for sale; even near one of the gates sat rows of women selling posies of roses, carnations and other sweet-smelling flowers. One of the nicest things about Sana was the way almost every little shop, even the smithies, had a small bunch of fresh flowers standing in a cup of water, and nearly all the tribesmen wore a spray of roses, sweet basil or other scented herbs in their turbans.

Sana has, too, a number of public baths. I visited the biggest, which was extraordinarily clean, and one of the most refreshing experiences I had was to take a bath myself. The town is also well supplied with simseras, great caravanserais where man, beast and merchandise put up at modest cost.

Over the Mountains by Mule.

It was sad to leave our little villa and to realise that in only a few days we should be back in the sweltering heat of an Aden June. We left at 6, and though it was so early, Raghib came to see us off although he had said goodbye the day before—in company with many others. We had arrived in Sana with a feeling of uncertainty and strangeness and we went away feeling we had left a home and friends. Three horsemen had been sent as escort and cantered ahead of us through the barely woken city and along the way we had come five weeks before until we dismissed them and waved goodbye. We got to Ma'abar about 1 and lunched for speed just beyond at the road fork, though the 'Amil had wanted us to stay and have it with him. While we lunched the luggage was rearranged, as the lorry was to go on via Hodeida to Taiz. The road to Dhamar was none too bad—over open plateau land mostly given over to herds. Dhamar seemed a pleasant open town; it had the air of a small town in the Midlands. The streets were fairly wide, it looked clean and there were no walls. It was built mostly in a pleasant grey.

After Dhamar the scenery became more interesting and we reached Yarim just after dark. It was pouring with rain and most difficult to avoid a soaking between the car and the house. Our quarters were the worst of the whole journey. The room we slept in looked moderately clean but the other arrangement were beyond description foul. It is curious how far the Yemen—in all the homes we stayed in—is behind the Hadhramaut. The combined lavatories and bathrooms—never separate—were simply awful, and the Yarim one just unbelievable. We slapped and scratched all night, for the fleas were the most ferocious we had met. However, we did have a very good dinner of all the best Yemeni dishes, for the Governor of 'Ibb had specially sent a cook for us. Next morning early we did a sightseeing tour. There were one or two striking views from the gate and a very impressive view of the ancient Himyaritic castle of Dhafar on its mountain, but Yarim was just the dirtiest and smallest Yemen town we saw. No doubt it would have been a bit better if it hadn't been raining so hard, but the narrow unpaved streets were too heavily covered with ordure, human and animal, to be really refreshing at the best of times.

Things improved rapidly when we left to find the mules 12 miles away, for we drove over pleasant common land to the foot of Jebel Sumarra. Here we had a picnic breakfast on grass of the right colour and texture and loaded the mules. A lot of to-do with the children, who were alarmed at the unusual motion of the mule, but they soon got used to it and our tinkling caravan moved at a spanking pace up the mountain while the car returned via Hodeida to meet us at Taiz. From then on for the next three days till we got into a car at Seiyani to run into Taiz, life was the purest pleasure. The grass-clad mountains, the splashing streams, the wild flowers of every colour, the singing of the birds, the indescribable views, seemed to put new life into us. I think they really were superb, but to us who had been nearly three years away from England they begged description. All our mountain paths were paved with stone steps built by Queen Saida eight hundred years before, and this form of path seemed to suit the mules. That day we climbed to 10,000 feet, rode over the tops of the mountains and descended—a much steeper path down which we had mostly to walk—to Makhadar, which we reached after sunset and had a lovely mountain welcome. A double lane of lantern-swinging soldiers met us with their trumpets about half a mile from the castle and escorted us with song to its summit where the 'Amil, Muhamad bin Sa'id, a strongly pro-British-friendship seiyyid, gave us warm welcome and an excellent dinner.

The next day we rode through green valleys ablaze with mimosa in bloom and first-class cultivation through the lively market of Suq as Sabt (and as it was

Saturday it was very lively) to the picturesque fortress town of 'Ibb, visible all the day's journey on its steep mountain top. We saw the town the next morning; it is exceptional in that it is all paved and therefore very clean. There were some good buildings and a remarkable old aqueduct brings water overhead to the centre of the town. Next day, too, was a wonderful ride through temperate green country. We had breakfast in a field of daisy-covered grass under the shade of a fine big tree and a brook bubbling by. We saw 'Ibb's sister fortress town of Jibla and then climbed up the mountain of Mahmul, from which again wonderful views abounded.

Up here in the mountain air with clear cascading brooks, it was strange to think we were only two days' journey from Aden. We dropped down the winding path to Seiyani by waterfalls and over arched bridges, and from there drove in the evening to Taiz. What a contrast it was a day later in the hot and steamy suq of dusty Lahej!

Impressions of the People.

One thing that struck me much that I have not seen sufficiently emphasised in reports, but which is mentioned by earlier travellers, was the friendliness of the country people. In many parts of the Aden Protectorate a visitor is viewed with suspicion. In the country villages of the Yemen, particularly in the hills, there seemed to be none of this. One's presence appeared to be taken as perfectly natural; there was no undue curiosity as to who we were and where we had come from and why. Your visit seemed to give pleasure and all that they wanted to do was some little service. I suppose the truth is that, in the protectorate, people in similar circumstances think you have come to steal their miserable little oases of a few plots of sandy soil and palms, whereas in the Yemen there is plenty of room for everybody and no doubt the Yemeni knows that the stranger has no vague rights of overlordship, which in the protectorate may, reassure one never so hard, turn out to be something rather sinister. In the towns this simple friendliness scarcely exists. There is kindly hospitality, but the Zeidi seiyid is often suspicious and the ordinary townsmen too frightened of what the Zeidis will say to make advances. Also, there is endless curiosity and that makes sight-seeing tiresome. And more often than not when people are friendly it is because they want something.

I do not think previous reports have made enough of qat eating as a background to an explanation of most of the politics talked and intrigues conducted in the Yemen, so I want to underline that. I think it is very important to grasp that qat rules the lives of the leisured classes and Government circles. Strictly speaking, the latter should be included in the former in the Yemen. And I do not know if "leisured" is the right word, for qat is a serious business and hard work. I first came in contact with it at Taiz. About 11 o'clock in the forenoon a particularly evil cacophony of trumpets announced to the world that His Royal Highness Seif al Islam Ahmed, Crown Prince of the Yemen, and Governor-General of Southern Yemen, is about to sally forth, and shortly afterwards he does. He walks at a great speed in the midst of a crowd of soldiers, sycophants, notables and Government officials with an umbrella held over his head and the procession, several hundreds strong, tears along for about three miles. Horses follow, and a couple of hours later the procession returns, H.R.H. usually on horseback or in a car and the rest in different degrees of exhaustion. I was rather impressed by this ceremonial royal progress when I first saw it and imagined that H.R.H. was making for some well-known tree to dispense open-air justice. When I learnt this was not so, I still thought that he believed in keeping fit. But not a bit of it. The avowed purpose of this daily marathon is simply to get up a thirst. You cannot really do justice to qat unless you have an absolutely first-class thirst. The professional qat eater eschews coffee, tea and any drink except water during his daily bout, but of water he drinks continuously.

When I was in Sana, the Foreign Minister told me that members of the royal house and all the other elect rushed up and down Mount Nuqum in the same manner every morning and for the same purpose. At Makhadar, where the Amil gave us such a warm and charming reception, he came down the steep hill hand in hand with me between a double row of soldiery as we left. I apologised to him for the trouble I was causing him, as he would have to climb up again. He replied, "It's no trouble at all, I have to go down every morning"—I thought he was going to say to inspect the village, but he went on—"in order to get up a qat thirst!" From enquiries made I learnt that everybody who is anybody (with very few exceptions) in the Yemen eats qat. It seemed strange if this were so amongst the agricultural classes, who are hard-working folk, and I was told

that most of them do not eat it, but that if they do acquire the habit it usually results in their ruin.

It is therefore principally a habit of the towns and its use means that very little real work is done in them from, say, noon onwards. Qat eating is a convivial habit. In our house at Sana the staff and the soldiers started about then, and by five o'clock their rooms looked like goat sheds—strewn with fodder. The qat addict at the height of his bout claims to feel a superman, he says it clears his head and that he can then settle every problem. Of course, as I say, most of this is well known, but I do not think it is sufficiently realised that all the politics are talked by qat eaters mostly under the influence of qat. In such circumstances I rather think we pay too much attention to reports of pro- or anti-British, Italian and German talks.

Impressions of Security.

I think that one of the things that seem most striking in the Yemen after the protectorate is the complete security. I am told that the purchase of arms and ammunition is free, but nowhere did I see any arms carried, except by troops. It has often been said that, though there is security, it is worse than the lack of it in the protectorate, because of the oppression by which it is secured. There is no doubt that the Imam's rule is oppressive and that he keeps security by methods which we should not care to see, but there must really be a very small percentage who actually suffer in a bodily way, and the population of the Yemen is between 2 and 3 million, at least. The taxation may also be oppressive, but it is certainly not so oppressive that it is uneconomic to labour. One of the most pleasing sights in the country is the cultivation—the wonderful terracing, the careful husbandry, crops being sown, half-grown, reaped, fields under plough, all at the same time. This could not happen if the taxation were too oppressive, nor could it happen without security. Arabs, like Irishmen, are always "agin" the Government, no matter how favourable Government is; so I think tales of oppression should be discounted to some extent. Sana, the seat of the Imam, is surrounded with cultivation, and the town is a hive of industry in the mornings—the clang of the blacksmiths' hammers, the saws of the carpenters and the alabaster workers are never idle, and in rows of little shops you see cobblers, jewellers, stone polishers, dagger workers and others busy at work. The grain market and the raisin market and all the other markets are full. Caravans pass in and out of the gates and the khans. This, again, could not happen if taxation were more than could be borne.

Judged from the standpoint of a possible Yemeni invasion of Aden, the Yemeni army, under its own officers, is, of course, a joke, but judged from the standpoint of its actual purpose, the maintenance of security, it is effective. It is curious that it should be so on \$6 a month; perhaps we try too much to have sufficiently-paid forces in the protectorate, which cannot afford them. There are large garrisons in all the big towns and at such strategic points as Makhadar. The Imam believes in showing strength in order not to have to use it, and my wife counted the Friday parade at Sana as 3,500.* I expect any regular soldier would have laughed at it, but by the time it was doing its second march past I had ceased my inward laughing and realised how impressive it was to the people. If there is trouble in an area, a largish force is sent there. This lives on the people, and they soon find it does not pay to cause trouble.

The day before we arrived at Sana the bodies of two murderers executed some days before were taken down from the Bab al Yemen. They had been found guilty of robbery and murder. In case of murder the Sharia requires eye-witnesses or a confession. Eye-witnesses are, of course, very rarely forthcoming, so they had been beaten and tortured into confession. They were then sentenced to have their hands cut off for robbery and their heads for murder. Murder by the Sharia is an affair between the murderers and the family of the murdered, and goes on the principle of a life for a life. The Quran, however, adds "but

(* Made up as follows:—

Regulars in khaki (Iraqi trained)	...	...	...	431
Regulars in qamis	...	...	...	997
10 machine gun sections	...	...	...	110
Artillery: 26 mountain and field guns	...	...	...	485
National Defence Army	...	...	...	1,503
				3,526

This figure excludes bands, the school of officers and signallers (numbering 117 on parade), and horsemen (about 30 on parade).

forgiveness is better." So the Imam pleads for the life of a murderer with the family, to the extent of throwing his turban before them and asking them to forgive him by his Imamate. Forgiveness in this case was not forthcoming. Having had their hands chopped off, gangrene set in and the head chopping had to be expedited. The arrangements were in the hands of the Minister of Health and Communications, and all Sana left its work to watch. Not a very civilised performance, but no doubt it discourages robbery and murder.

Impressions of Politics.

My impressions of the politics of the Yemen recorded in these notes must be regarded entirely as my own. I have not taken into account previous reports, and they are based on observations and conversations with people of all classes.

Government is, practically speaking, in the hands of the Imam and the seiyids. No Government appointment of any importance is held by anyone except a Zeidi, and few by any except seiyids. The Imam knows a great deal of what goes on, but there is a great deal he does not know. On the whole, the administration, being entirely Zeidi, is loyal to him, and this gives colour to the belief that he is all-knowing. (But, for instance, the Imam, being intelligent, genuinely desires to be on friendly terms with us, but many of his officials, being stupid, think that he wants to press actively the extension of his kingdom to its ancient bounds, and so cause trouble, which he definitely does not want. However, as he knows them to be loyal to him, he finds difficulty in accepting our word against theirs.) It is important to remember the essential priest-king attribute of the Imam. It is the Ulema, representing the seiyids, who elect him, and if he fulfils the fourteen points he is, when elected, almost divine. No Zeidi can even say his prayers in a valid way if there is no Imam, and the Imam's position is not complicated, as amongst the Shafis, by saint worship. There are no welis amongst the Zeidis. So, provided an Imam sticks to his brief and fulfils his functions, he has unlimited loyalty amongst the Zeidis, where his rule must be secure, but as most of the country appears to be Shafi, his rule outside the Zeidi highlands is fairly insecure, and depends entirely on a sufficient show of force by his Zeidi army, and the army is all Zeidi. Very fine material, badly trained and badly officered.

The whole kingdom is likely to be rocked on the death of an Imam, because of the competition for election as successor. The Imam has secured the recognition of his eldest son, Ahmed, as his heir, but there are, of course, a number of rivals, who will dispute this at his death. In foreign politics the Imam would prefer two Powers in the Red Sea, so that he can play one off against the other. I think he has made up his mind that there is now only going to be one, and he would much rather have us as the one than have the Germans as the second.

In internal politics the Imam plays for isolation. He does not want any change in his theocratic rule, and realises that too much playing with outside influences and the introduction of modern education would mean the end of it. He is extraordinarily astute at deciding just how much foreign influence is necessary to assure a possible *modus vivendi* with foreigners which will avoid foreign infiltration and to obtain the benefit of such foreign things as can be assimilated without upsetting the age-old framework of the country.

No foreigners except the Turks assimilated into the country are treated on the same footing as Yemenis. This applies just as much to Moslems as others, and the Iraqi and Egyptian and Syrian employees have not a penn'orth more influence than the British and Italian employees. No foreigner has any responsibility or power. In every case there is a Yemeni, generally a seiyid, over him. I have been told it is because he does not trust them. I believe this to be partly wrong, for the Imam is not such a fool as to think that, e.g., Dr. Petrie is more likely to cheat him than a seiyid. He knows that with their miserable pay his seiyids are bound to make something on the side. I think the real reason is to avoid too much progress. It results in some really astonishing decisions. The Board of Health is presided over by the Minister of Health, with a seiyid as secretary. The foreign doctors are members. They unanimously recommended the destruction of pariah dogs as a health measure. The secretary reminded the board that there was a tradition that if the dogs decreased, the Jews would increase, so the proposal was solemnly recorded in the minutes as turned down for that reason!

The vast majority of the population, of course, are not interested in politics as long as they can make a living. This, as I have said, they appear to be able to do. I think the Zeidis are on the whole satisfied, agriculturists and all. But the Shafis anyway hate the arrogant Zeidi officials, and so any grouse is useful

to complain "agin" the Government. I agree that when the Imam dies the Crown Prince will be hard put to it to keep his throne. He is universally detested, and the Imam knows it. He sent him a telegram a short time ago remonstrating with him for his oppressions.

"Politics" are confined almost entirely to the towns, and, as I have said, owe most of their vigour to qat. But external questions are mostly academic. A good pro-Moslem and anti-Christian argument is certain of a good hearing, not because it really affects the debaters at all, but simply because, being pan-Arab in sentiment, tends to protect them against outside interference. Of all the independent kingdoms of the Middle East, the one that counts least is the Yemen, because, apart from the possibilities of the Red Sea littoral and the Aden Protectorate boundary, it is completely isolated from questions which affect world politics, such as the Suez Canal, the Haramain, oil and air routes.

So really the Yemen is practically cut off from the rest of the Middle East, and this is reflected also in the extraordinary narrowness of the people. Taking everything into consideration, I think all the qat gas is probably extremely harmless. The Yemenis, like all the rest of the Arabs (only being mostly mountaineers rather more than the rest), simply want to be left alone (subject, of course, to the Shafis wanting to be better treated than they are). They certainly do not want to amalgamate with any others, and could only do so on terms of complete inferiority.

I fancy we could have the Yemen completely and happily in our pocket if we manoeuvred it into the position of a British sphere of influence rather on the lines of one of the independent kingdoms like Nepal, on the borders of India. Thinking about our position in the Yemen made me review it over South-West Arabia as a whole in another memorandum attached as an appendix,* and if we treated the kingdom as I have said there, I think we should have all, and more, of the influence we want without any suspicion. The whole secret is, I think, not to push anything down their throats: simply insist on the integrity of our protectorate, visit them regularly and do not try to get or give anything. I believe Raghib expects something like this to happen, for off his own bat one afternoon he gave me a long résumé of Yemeni foreign relations, said why Imam could not have any foreign representatives at his Court, and expressed the view that after the war he would be able to accept a British representative without having to accept any other. With the Red Sea for all practical purposes a British lake, even Hodeida would not offer much opportunity for foreign infiltration. If we could organise a regular British coastal service between Kamaran and Shihr there need be very little reason for foreign ships ever to enter Hodeida. Before the war it was only Italian shipping that used the port besides ourselves.

Impressions of Personalities.

The Imam.—My previous impression of the Imam gained from other people's descriptions and Amin Rihani's picture was of a narrow-minded old man, a bigot, but with expansive moments. I think, and I said to some of those in his entourage who agreed with me, that it is a pity that the Imam never allows his photograph to be taken. I think I can best describe my own impression by saying that he looked like a genial, rather gouty, Father Christmas. He was exceedingly charming to me on the occasions I met him, and he seemed to me shrewd, quick to grasp a point, and genuinely anxious not to be treated with suspicion. Taking all reports into consideration also, and by reports I mean all that I have heard in Sana and elsewhere from those who know him, I should sum him up as an exceedingly clever old man, who, though he has seen nothing of the world but the interior of the Yemen, is well capable of weighing up such information as he gets of the rest of the world. I think he firmly believes in his divine right, that he exercises it conscientiously, but recognises the difficulty of maintaining a rule such as his in a world such as this. To this is to be attributed his anxiety to keep out foreign influences, while keeping out of education anything that may be disruptive, to adopt anything the modern world may have to offer which can be adopted without disruptive consequences. I believe he genuinely wishes to be friendly with his neighbours, and at the moment more especially with us, as he sees the probability of our being the only Western Power near him.

In his personal habits he is probably as austere as a Moslem can be. I gather that he is devoted to his old wife and she to him. I would call him careful rather than close, but he is certainly so careful that people not unnaturally think he is

(*) Not printed.

mean. His family is, on the whole, a disappointment to him, but 'Abdulla, whose mother is the oldest wife on the establishment, is his favourite son and seemed to me the one of those I met who most combined a pleasant personality and intelligence, even if he is not liked.

The Crown Prince.—He seemed to me on my first visit the ideal embodiment of the wicked wazir or Bluebeard. He is short and stout, bullet-headed, with a large turban on too small a cap, a forked beard of different lengths, and eyes that pop out of his head to an alarming extent. I should think he would terrify a child. He stinks of scent. His eyes were his principal feature, and he looked as if someone had tried to strangle him and made a bad job of it. I heard afterwards that he had cultivated this appearance by tying cords round his neck to the point of suffocation. On my second visit I examined him more closely and saw he had the largest eyes I have ever seen. He was exceedingly haughty and aggressive on my first visit, but very much more anxious to please on the second, when he seized and squeezed my hand, as we sat at the table, for a considerable period. It smelt of scent the rest of the day. I have no doubt he is cruel and he is everywhere detested and feared except by a small circle of people. I do not know enough about them to say whether they are sycophants or genuine admirers. I have an idea that he is now more moderately disposed towards us than he has been.

Seif al Islam 'Abdulla, Governor of Hodeida.—I met 'Abdulla just after meeting the Crown Prince and the contrast between them may have been responsible for the very favourable impression he made on me. He is mild-mannered and his gold-rimmed spectacles give an impression of studiousness. He is a gentleman, which Ahmed is not, but he did not give me an impression of being a strong character. However, I found out in the course of being questioned for an hour that he knew what he was talking about and could pick out the essential points of a case. He seemed reasonable in argument and did not press points which he knew were weak. He is said to be the Imam's favourite son, and, after seeing most of the others, that struck me as another point in the Imam's favour. I gather that since he has been Governor of Hodeida he has become very unpopular in view of his money-making activities.

Seif al Islam Hussein.—When I saw him he addressed me as if I were a public meeting. He is proud, but not unfriendly. We did not discuss politics but history, in which he is apparently interested, and he offered to lend me books.

Seif al Islam 'Ali.—I met him once in a house and twice in the street. On each occasion he had obviously had a thick night before and had the stupid look of the habitual drunkard. On one occasion I got a blast of stale, drink-laden breath. A pity, as everyone says he is naturally intelligent and broad-minded—no doubt too broad-minded.

Seif al Islam Qasim.—Minister of Health and Communications. He does his best to deal with his job conscientiously, but is quite at sea with even simple problems. He gave me the impression of a very junior officer landed to act in a very high post. Not very intelligent, but personally very pleasant. Informal, and hates wearing anything on his head. He received me bare-headed, and I met him at a Syrian dinner-party, where he was also bare-headed. He managed a knife and fork fairly well and was the only real Arab of the party (Hasan Tahsin Pasha, his son the dentist, Dr. Samy, Petrie, Salih Jaffer and self). Qasim struck me (and Petrie, who is in his department, confirms it) as a simple, friendly soul with no prejudices against strangers.

Seif al Islam Al Hasan.—Governor of 'Ibb. I went to pay a formal call at 7 P.M. and got away at 9.30. He looked a younger edition of the Crown Prince, bullet-headed and short, but without the cruelty. We discussed the war, Arab politics, and so on. He was diffident in his opinions and not well informed, but seemed intelligent.

Rest of the Princes.—I just met Seif al Islam Ismail with two of his brothers, but he was quiet and said little. He seemed a nice youth. Two of the other sons were in prison. Their father had offered to let them out, but they had discovered they had more liberty in jail than in the palace and had declined.

The Queen.—The principal queen (there are four) is Sitt Fatima. She is the mother of Seif al Islam 'Abdulla, Seif al Islam Ismail, Seif al Islam Ibrahim and a young unmarried daughter. She refers to herself laughingly as a "Beduwia," and is, in fact, a tribeswoman. She has a quiet dignity and simple charm of manner. She is quite uneducated and it is unlikely that she enters into politics in any way, although she holds a high place in the Imam's estimation. He relies chiefly on her for the management of his domestic comforts. She is reported to be very kindly, while her charm and dignity (not impaired by the fact

that, when necessary, she can tuck up her skirts and prepare the Imam's bath herself) induce the respect and affection of those around her.

Qadhi 'Abdulla Al 'Amri.—Prime Minister. I found him a pleasant, modest man and quiet-spoken. He had intelligent, gentle eyes, was a good and careful listener and made few but intelligent comments. He is shy and old-fashioned and was pleasantly paternal in his manner of treating me. The Imam sent him and Raghib to see my wife and myself after a review, and I am told that was about the only occasion he has met a European woman, but he was very charming. I liked also his brother 'Ali, the Deputy Governor of Hodeida, who had accompanied Hussein to London.

Qadhi Muhammad Raghib Bey.—Foreign Minister. Quite the best known of the Yemeni notabilities and generally considered a "twister." A blue-eyed, well-groomed old man who is quite aware of his good looks without being conceited about them. A great ladies' man with exquisite manners. His ex-wife with two married daughters is settled in Sana, and his second wife of long standing is described below. He has also for the third time "married his cook." So he has two wives living in the house, but the second knows her station and does not presume. It is a comfortable, well-run house and no doubt a convenient arrangement. Many of the hours we spent together were filled with memoirs of diplomatic life in Paris, Vienna, St. Petersburg and Berlin. His early career was consular in places like Constantza, Cetinje and small Balkan posts. I listened enthralled to his stories, for he is a wonderful raconteur with a photographic memory for detail. It seemed to me there were probably few left who could reminisce on the old diplomacy and a Europe of forty years ago. He confided to me that he wished his life had been the other way round—that he had spent his early years in a backwater like the Yemen and that he was now in Europe. He deplored the present diplomacy and attributed many of the ills of Europe to the fact that professional diplomatists were so often cut out by ministerial amateurs.

He definitely considers himself European (which, of course, he is) and discussed the Yemen and its and our affairs objectively as a loyal foreign employee. He is an exile and has not been absorbed. He has a great sense of humour and perfectly sees the humorous side of his Royal master, whom he regards affectionately as a character, though he watches his step carefully with him.

Of late reports show that he had ceased to propagate anti-British opinions, and at his Friday gatherings he weighs up the news and comes down on our side. He told me that, despite our muddlings, we were bound to win, as we had more reserves than the Germans. Among these he included America and Mr. Churchill. He was very critical of Lord Baldwin and Mr. Chamberlain, particularly the latter. They seemed to know very little in Sana of our little frontier matters, and Raghib kept on reiterating that they get all out of proportion and were only small affairs which goodwill on the part of the officers on both sides on the spot ought to be able to settle. While he still repeated the Imam's charge that our "young officers" were too often trying to make a name for themselves and taking the attitude of local amils as that of the capital; he criticised some amils very much and said the Imam and he were always in difficulties over their reports, fearing that they were exaggerating.

Mme. Raghib Bey.—Qadhi Muhammad's principal wife, Selvett, is an elderly Turkish lady of great personality and charm. She was married before and lived for some years in Hodeida. She was left a rich widow and much of her money has been spent on Qadhi Raghib. She has no children of her own, but has adopted several, whom she educated and in due course marries them off and takes a grandmotherly interest in their children. She has a most kindly disposition, with shrewd intelligent eyes. Although badly, if at all, educated, there is no doubt she has a quick understanding and could perhaps have a certain influence on her husband in his political life, but whether she does so or not I have no idea. She has no jealousy of the younger wife, for, indeed, their claims to their husband's affection are entirely different, and she likes and is liked by the divorced wife and her step-children.

Raghib Bey's Daughters.—The elder daughter, Wahabia, was married to the Crown Prince for some years. She was not at all happy and her father managed to obtain a divorce for her. Subsequently she married Mandub Bey, son of Al Farik Tahsin Pasha. Mandub is a dentist, who worked previously in Jibuti. Wahabia has intelligence and personality. She is modern in outlook, wears European dress and dislikes the purdah life of Sana. Her sister, Aziza, is married to Seif al Islam Qasim. She has inherited the charm of her father and,

as she is intelligent also, she may well become a lady of influence when she is older. She and her husband are happily married and she is more reconciled to the secluded life than her elder sister.

Seiyid 'Abdulla al Wazir.—I had first met Seiyid 'Abdulla in 1936, when he was Governor of Hodeida. His personality had struck me then, and my recollections were of a big man with a large beard, a huge hook nose and a great air of importance. It was at the time of the Italo-Abyssinian war, and he had asked me whether Britain would ever resist the aggression of Italy or fight Germany again. My reply had been that Britain had believed in disarmament and the League of Nations, and that when she saw that these did not work she would rearm and resist aggression. He had said he was glad to hear it, but did not seem to believe it. We recalled this conversation and he said he was glad to see my words had come true. In a long discussion, which embraced the war and the relations between Great Britain and the Yemen, his most striking remark was perhaps "If you love the Yemen, pray for the long life of the Imam." He made some kindly remarks about my work in the Hadhramaut, and said that the relations between Yemen and Great Britain would never suffer if those of the latter who dealt with them cared for and understood the Arabs. I was just as struck with his personality as before, but he seemed more mellow and more assured than before. He is a worker and, I think, statesmanlike. I should say he is the most outstanding Yemeni I have met.

Seiyid Hussein 'Abdul Qadir and his son, Muhammad.—Seiyid Hussein is the Amil of Sana. I had three meetings with him. Old and slow of speech, but not a very striking personality. Talked mostly about the war and very anxious to discuss Yemeni politics. As I hedged on the latter, the conversation was mostly in metaphors. His son came and had a "secret" interview, designed to find out what he should do in the case of internal disturbance in the Yemen. He got no change out of me and finally gave it up, saying that, apparently, the time was not yet ripe for such discussions. The Amil is a frequent companion of the Imam and acts as a sort of Boswell to him. No doubt the Imam knows as well as everyone else that Seiyid Hussein thinks of himself as a future Imam and that his son fancies himself as a crown prince.

Salih Ja'afer.—Salih Ja'afer takes such a part in Yemeni politics, while remaining such a staunch British servant, that I feel impelled to write my impressions of him as I saw him, for the first time, with his Yemeni background. Salih certainly knows everybody who is anybody in the Yemen and a great many who are not. The latter all call him "Uncle Salih," and amongst the former he has several intimate ties. Raghib calls him "my son," and his wife "my nephew." Raghib's wife was the widow of a well-known Turkish bey and had lived in Aden for some years when Salih was a child. He had then called her "aunt." There is no marriage connexion. Also Seif al Islam Hussein's wife belongs to one of the Aden Persian families, like Salih Ja'afer, and has known him since her childhood. She calls him "brother." I have always regarded Salih as a most valuable, loyal and discreet public servant and my impressions are confirmed. He does not really like living in Hodeida, though he is content enough, and would be very happy if ever he was given a move back to Aden. I expect this is unlikely, in view of his unique value where he is. I was amused to find that Salih is a great "snob" in an amiable way. He adores all the mixing with Royal Highnesses and Excellencies, and rolls such words round his tongue twenty times a day. I was surprised to find how little he knows of the Yemen, though he has constantly travelled the more beaten paths. He knows few of the smaller villages, practically nothing about the tribes, very little about the industries and agriculture and, in fact, his knowledge is chiefly confined to bazaar commerce and political intrigue. He is an excellent political intelligence agent, but not nearly so good a political officer as was his brother Hasan.

The Medical Mission.—I have always had an admiration for Dr. Petrie, and this grew when I saw him at home and at work in Sana. The two ladies with him, Miss Croskery and Miss Cowie, are not only most charming but made me wish we had several more like them for welfare work in the Colony and Protectorate. I do not think we realise to the full the admirable work this trio does and how much British prestige has benefited by their quiet work, which has made them greatly loved in Sana and known in distant villages. On my journey I constantly heard Dr. Petrie's name spoken with respect, and on two occasions owed small courtesies from poor people to being mistaken for him. It has several times been suggested that he was being too missionary, but I saw no evidence whatever of this, and he himself mentioned the care he took not to do anything beyond trying to be himself an example—which he is; a very bright, shining one.

He realises very well that he has to watch his step and that if he did actively missionise his success would be prejudiced gravely.

He and the ladies run with the £50 Government allowance a dispensary and operating theatre at their house and do there a great deal of good. There is much red tape about the Government hospital (how many British doctors would we find ready to work under the control of a negro house governor who has to approve every admission and the issue of even a dose of salts?) so that many come to be treated at the dispensary. They make the £50 go further by charging for all treatment—a most excellent thing—and by putting the money back to buy more drugs and instruments. Dr. Petrie ought to be provided with a clerk to keep the accounts and clerical work and the grant ought to be substantially increased: that is, the dispensary should be a regular Government (our Government) show and that is what he would like.

Relations and Discussions with the Yemeni Government.

The main object of my visit to the Yemen was to be friendly. I had long been regarded as the villain on account of my activities at Al 'Abr and I had to live that down. In order of my seeing them the Crown Prince (to a slight degree), the Foreign Minister, the Imam, the Prime Minister and the Amil of Sana referred to these activities and I thought the best way I could go about it was to describe exactly what had happened. I said it had long been known to me that His Majesty had on more than one occasion deplored the lack of order in the Protectorate and that I had always considered that a just complaint. That in the Hadhramaut I had generally devoted my energies to the establishment of peace and the strengthening of the autonomous Governments of the chiefs, and that I had reason to believe that my efforts had met with fairly general approval in the country. I said that while I had been at Aden our relations with the Yemen were a matter of daily consideration, but that when I went to Mukalla the Yemen felt very far away and that I had no idea of any boundary complications. In fact I had never thought of them, though I could say that, quite apart from the fact that it was the policy of His Majesty's Government, my own sympathies and desires were entirely for the integrity of the Yemen and for friendly relations with it.

I said that in the course of peace-making every single tribe of the Wadi Hadhramaut and its western borders, not to mention such eastern tribes as the Hamumis and Manahil, had enquired what the case would be with the Sei'ar if they joined a general truce. There was hardly a tribe which had not got scores to settle with them. I had said they would be brought into it too. I said that the matter was not long in being put to the test. The Sei'ar looted forty-three camels of the Manahil and kept them at Al 'Abr, where the Manahil saw them and I saw them from the air. I said the Manahil chief had co-operated very loyally with me. He promised to keep his people from counter-raiding if I did something. I then told the whole story of the campaign, bringing in all the journey bits and got them really interested. I said when we had put in, with Sei'ar consent, a garrison of fifteen men to stop further trouble, there was no further trouble and there had not been from that day to this a further Sei'ar loot. Was I or was I not justified? And I ended up by saying that I had never a thought of any treading on Yemeni toes when I did it; there was not a sign nor a mention of Yemeni influence and I never dreamt of there being a Yemeni claim to the place. Qadhi 'Abdulla remarked that he had forgotten that there was a Yemeni claim while I told the story!

I do not suppose the Imam has completely dropped his claim, but neither he nor his Ministers even suggested further, in any sort of way, that there was any claim all the time I was there, and at my last interview he made some very friendly remarks about me personally, I think much more than were necessary if he still regarded me as a villain or than politeness required. He said I had done great service to the Arabs; that I was not only Sadiq Hadhramaut but Sadiq al Arab; that he had great confidence I would do good work for the Yemen. He said he had full confidence in me and authorised me to be his attorney. Raghib was at this interview and later the Amil of Sana came to say that the Imam had informed him that he had authorised me as his attorney. How far the authority will carry me I do not pretend to know! But Salih Ja'afer says he has only once before done this and that in the case of Sir Bernard Reilly over some point connected with the treaty.

All my interviews and contacts with different authorities were uniformly friendly (except the first with the Crown Prince) and I need not report them in

detail I attach some notes(*) by Salih Ja'afar on them. As I stated on my return, I am quite sure Yemeni attitude to us has improved, and since my return this is plain in the Imam's letters and even the conduct of the Crown Prince. There was a marked contrast in the tone of my first interview at Taiz and my last the last I had in the Yemen). This I think is generally due to the Italian collapse.

W. H. INGRAMS.

Aden, August 14, 1941.

(*) Not printed.

[E 8551/8551/25]

No. 52.

Mr. Stonehewer-Bird to Mr. Eden.—(Received December 26.)

(No. 47.)

HIS Majesty's Minister at Jedda presents his compliments to His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State and has the honour to transmit to him a copy of reports dated the 12th, 13th and 14th November, 1941, by Colonel De Gaury on his interviews with King Saud.

Jedda, December 6, 1941.

Enclosure 1 in No. 52.

Colonel De Gaury to Mr. Stonehewer-Bird.

Sir,

Riyadh, November 12, 1941.

I ARRIVED in Riyadh in the mid-afternoon of the 12th November. The King at once sent to ask whether I would prefer to be received immediately or after dark. I told the Chamberlain, Tabaishi, that I would prefer the later audience.

I was therefore bidden to come at 3 o'clock Arab time (about 8.30 P.M.). We were lodged in the Murabba Palace and so only had a few yards to walk. On the way through the corridors of the Palace some of the soldiers were brushed aside by a chamberlain to reveal the brightly painted gates of His Majesty's new lift.

The King looked extremely well, unchanged since 1939, and received me cordially. After the usual exchange of compliments, I told him that it had been thought that he might like to discuss with me our management of tribal affairs in Syria. His Majesty immediately showed that he had been made fully aware, by you, of the objects of my visit and that he much appreciated the courtesy of sending someone *au courant* with affairs in the north to visit him.

He said, making use, for the first time with me, of the expression *akhui* (my brother), that he would like to discuss this and also affairs in Iraq when we were alone: at audiences which would begin to-morrow.

Nevertheless, he began to discuss Iraq immediately, giving me a number of details about the events leading up to the *débâcle* of May 1941, and describing the arrival here in Riyadh of Naji Suwaidi and his own attitude in regard to the latter. This is, no doubt, well known to His Majesty's Legation in Jedda, and to the embassy in Bagdad, and in any case is not of much consequence now; but the fact that Ibn Saud, immediately on my arrival, embarked on this now old history made me think that he is still perturbed at what His Majesty's Government may think of his having painted Rashid Ali less blackly than that odious Iraqi deserves.

This audience was, of course, intended to be merely a formal one on arrival, and we reverted for a short time to non-political subjects—the lift and the King's health; the latter being extremely good, the former out of order! It was not, however, for long that the King could keep off politics and within a few minutes he was discussing the movements of Jemal al Hussaini and he said that he would show me to-morrow a letter to him from Jemal, which I would find very interesting. From this he went lightly off to the heavy subject of Arab Federation, saying that, as he had often pointed out to Arab politicians, the fact that there had not been spontaneous concerting of plans, either in regard to

the Jews or in regard to this war—the two greatest problems with which living Arabs were ever likely to be faced—showed how little real hope there was for a successful federation. In a few quick words, interlaced with classical and Bedouin quotations, he conveyed to my mind that if we were seriously interested in Arab Federation we should certainly have to give the necessary impetus to it ourselves. This was the only hope for federation. The Arabs owed everything to Britain. It was she who had given them their freedom and who maintained their freedom for them to-day. As Lord Allenby had once said, "if we leave Egypt to-morrow morning, the Greeks will be in by the evening." (I do not know his authority for this statement or if he really meant Greeks, but that is what he said.) The Arabs had no determination in construction and were easily susceptible to disintegration. A thousand Germans, if they had reached Iraq, could have so shaken the Middle East structure, which we had built up, that it would have collapsed and twenty-five years of laborious effort on our part would have come crashing about our ears in irretrievable ruin. He had been greatly relieved at the speed with which we had been able to restore the loyal régime in Iraq.

This shows, I hope, sufficiently well the general trend of Ibn Saud's conversation at my opening audience. About half way through it, Khalid al Qaraghani, the Tripolitan politician and secretary to His Majesty, had slipped into the room through a side door but had seated himself out of earshot. A few minutes later H.R.H. The Crown Prince came in and our conversation was interrupted for a moment whilst I took leave to greet him.

Mr. Uniacke was present with me.

If you see no objection would you please send a copy of this letter to the Minister of State and to the Middle East Intelligence Centre at Headquarters, Middle East, Cairo.

I have, &c.

GERALD DE GAURY.

Enclosure 2 in No. 52.

Colonel De Gaury to Mr. Stonehewer-Bird.

Sir,

Riyadh, November 13, 1941.

IN this letter I have the honour to continue my report on audiences of Ibn Saud at Riyadh.

Before being received by him this morning I had asked to be taken to the Crown Prince, whose morning reception rooms are also in the Old Palace of Feisal, inside the city walls, the St. James's Palace of Riyadh, as it were.

The gateways, the pillared covered ways and the sanded corridors were, as is usual, filled with Bedouin visitors, soldiers and bodyguardsmen.

H.R.H. the Emir conversed politely on various subjects, and offered us the loan of mares to ride in the afternoons. He made appreciative reference to the cinematograph films sent to His Majesty by the embassy in Bagdad, and would like more. They are very short ones, it seems.

Ibn Saud received me alone and talked at great length—for more than an hour and a half. He began by speaking of Syria. At first he seemed a little guarded, and he is evidently not very happy about that country, but guarded as he was about our actions, he did not avoid expressing his opinion of the Free French, "the corrupt Frenchmen who had even stolen food sent by the British for the relief of the Syrians."

He said that everyone knew about this, their untrustworthiness and their threatening of those who were friendly to or visited the British, and presumably I knew this too. I had to acknowledge that I had heard such things said. For a moment he seemed about to become rather heated.

I asked him about control in the desert, and he showed that he knew about the Commission of Enquiry at Deir ez Zor and the events preceding it. I said that we hoped for a better system soon. His own contribution was a rather surprising one.

He said that if we could find the right man, which would be the difficulty, we should appoint a delegate or commissioner ("mandoub") for desert affairs to work from a base in Iraq.

I asked him again, to make sure, where the seat of the commissioner should be. He said Iraq, from where he would be able to contact all the tribes.

I suppose that he hoped that the commissioner would be in contact with him, too, if he were based in Iraq, and he certainly has a very high regard for Sir Kinahan Cornwallis, under whose direction, I suppose, the commissioner would work.

With regard to the frontier of Saudi Arabia and Iraq, he said that he was ready to agree to one or two British representatives to arbitrate, adding that the American surveyors (for demarcation) could be employed if we desired. He said: "We are used to working with them," meaning the surveyors of C.A.S.O.C.; a suggestion to which, I presume, the Iraqi Government would object.

He thought that an alternative and better idea would be to make a neutral zone the whole length of the frontier.

The treaties in question and the articles in them about the frontier were made under our direction, and we should not shirk our responsibilities in regard to them now at the final stage. It was desirable to simplify matters as soon as possible—there were too many "papers" now. It was very confusing. All might be scrapped and embodied in a single new document once the frontier was settled, but he felt quite certain that nothing would be done unless we pressed the Iraqi Government.

With regard to Jadaidat al Arar, he used almost precisely the same words as Mr. Edmonds, and thought that it should not be difficult to settle.

Nuri as Said had spoken equally hopeful, if more plaintively, and had said that they (Iraq) were ready to accept British, American or Egyptian arbitration. "Tell Ibn Saud that we will accept you as arbitrator," he said.

Throughout this talk Ibn Saud's theme seemed to be that the Arab countries, his own included, were dependent upon Britain for their existence and that we must take a greater measure of responsibility in helping them if they were to live through the coming strain upon them.

He gave as an instance of this what had happened in Iraq recently. We had washed our hands clean of her internal affairs and had allowed her army to become politicians to a man, from the drummers up to the C.I.G.S.

He became very animated in describing the iniquity of such a policy.

The Iraqis and other Arabs were not suited to such developments. The guilt was ours. In peace time we should have two great military centres whence we could move troops quickly. The local armies now should have with them British officers who spoke the language, and they should not be allowed to go beyond a limited strength in armaments or numbers. We must dictate to Iraq this child of our creation if it were not to be a nuisance to itself, to us and to its neighbours repeatedly.

London had been partly reduced to dust by German bombers, and he could see no point in failing to face the realities of the present situation or the danger in the future.

Thanks to the British Government, food prices were on the whole still quite low in Arabia. He seemed to be satisfied with this, which had worried him so much in 1939, and about the pilgrimage situation.

He produced the letter from Jemal al Hussaini he had promised to show me. It was from Tehran and deplored their present quandary.

If this letter is a criterion, the Hussaini hopes are low, despite the German advance in Russia.

He said that Jemal was the best of the family.

He had heard that I was going off to the Yemen, and if that were so, he would help me to go by road. It was not such a bad road and if the Imam agreed to my going, all arrangements would be made by him (Ibn Saud). He said: "Yahya is a good man, but hopelessly ill-informed of what is going on, the poor wretch ('al meskeen'), because of the pro-Italian clique round him, Raghib, the Prince Ahmed, and the others who are all working for the enemy. A visit would be a good thing, and he would send letters for me."

At this point the chiming clock interrupted us to strike midday, the hour of prayer, and I took the opportunity it gave to seek His Majesty's leave to withdraw.

I have tried to reduce this lengthy talk into its essence, but with such an animated and rapid talker, flitting rapidly among the affairs of several countries at once, it is not an easy thing to do.

I have, &c.

GERALD DE GAURY.

Enclosure 3 in No. 52.

Colonel De Gaury to Mr. Stonehewer-Bird.

Sir,

Riyadh, November 14, 1941.

THIS morning I was sent for by His Majesty for another audience.

He was in a very good humour. We started off by discussing his family, and I asked him whether Mansour were the eighth or ninth son. He laughingly admitted his ignorance, and we had to count his sons on our fingers, which were not enough.

This gave me an opportunity to make an allusion, in the biblical style, to the blessing by God of his stock and, after a moment of reflection, to say that other families were not so blessed.

He then touched on the question of the Syrian Monarchy, saying, without a trace of hesitation, "the best thing for that country is to remain a republic. Where there is no suitable man, why put in a puppet. A king without kingly attributes is worse than useless."

He said that in regard to the Syrian Desert, we really must come to an agreement with the French. He kept on repeating this, and how the French were penalising those who had been responsive to us when we first entered the country, and who visited our officials now. This was an impossible situation, and we should take steps to terminate it one way or another. He spoke of his close relations with the Sha'alan, from whom he received much information about what was going on in Syria.

Arabs had to be treated firmly, and this weakness and division in the administration was just the opportunity by which the enemy would profit, through the Arabs who always took such opportunities.

On the contrary, instead of being played off by the Arabs we should balance the Arab tribes one against the other, just as he had balanced, for example, the Qahtan against the Ataiba and the Ataiba against the Qahtan. The placing by the French of Ibn Muhaid over all the North Syrian tribes was ridiculous—he was shrewd, but rather a weak man anyway, and in addition it was a completely wrong method. Also, we should not pay large subsidies to the tribesmen.

In all his talk of the desert, in his stories of Fowwaz Ibn Sha'alan and the French, &c.—he had not yet mentioned Glubb Pasha, so I asked him bluntly whether Glubb was not the man to administer the Syrian desert. He said that there was no one better. He knew all the tribes and their customs admirably well, and patiently achieved his ends. He could advantageously be employed in the Syrian desert, but that, unless we had a really working arrangement with the French, it would be useless sending him. If there had been a good British delegate in Deir ez Zor there would not have been the recent trouble. He hoped that somehow or other it would be arranged that after the war there would be no French in Syria, but British influence there.

I said: "Yesterday your Majesty told me that the best seat for a British Desert Commissioner was in Iraq." He brightened at once, and seemed to find this more interesting. "Yes," he said, "for me it is more important to have an Englishman in the Iraq desert."

I said that Iraq was an independent country, but I supposed they could have an administrative inspector in the desert. He made it clear that this was not what he meant, but a "mandoub," a representative of the ambassador.

He repeated his remarks about the thousand Germans. If there had been time for a thousand Germans to arrive in Iraq last spring we should have seen the Middle East in chaos. It was miraculous that we had reached Baghdad when we had. If we had delayed patiently in Basra, it would have been the end of peace in Arabia. We had been neglectful in the past, and now we had been given a God-sent lesson. He prayed to God that we were going to take advantage of this respite. The time was running out.

Be firm with the Arabs—war is not peace. On the other hand, I was not to exaggerate his words. It was not for him to interfere or offer advice. It was our affair, not his.

As for Iraq, Nuri was a better Premier than others. Jamil Madfai was slow and wooden-headed (the same words used to me by the Regent of Iraq and in the embassy in Baghdad). Alas, Nuri was not stable. (In 1939 he had told me of his low opinion of Nuri, and read to me his letters from Egypt asking for Ibn Saud's help against his own country, Iraq.)

"Do you want me to give you my advice in a nutshell? Do what you know is right for the Arabs, whether they agree or not, because they never will agree."

They must always be somewhat frightened of you. You will never alter them in a thousand years. You can suit your policy to them if you will, but it is useless expecting them to turn themselves into different people, and if you continue to expect them to do so you will be gravely disappointed and they will suffer seriously.

"I have said before that some of those clever officials of London should be especially appointed to form an office to study and deal with Arab matters."

It was in this way that the torrent of His Majesty's talk ran on, like the spates in the wadis of his own Jebel Tuwaik; suddenly, forcefully, they pour out, to run this way and that, some quickly losing themselves, others flooding on, carrying everything before them; whilst here and there a side trickle, small though it may be, is at least refreshing and enjoyable.

I thanked His Majesty for his offer to facilitate our journey to the Yemen, and he said that he had telegraphed already to the Emir Feisal, Viceroy of the Hejaz, about it, and that such was the least he could do and unworthy of thanks. He would always help us where and when he could.

I have, &c.

GERALD DE GAURY.

Enclosure 4 in No. 52.

Colonel De Gaury to Mr. Stonehewer-Bird.

Sir,

Riyadh, November 14, 1941.

AT my final audience this night, His Majesty was again most good-humoured and cordial.

He told me that it was unlikely that he would go to the Pilgrimage this season, although he would go down later to see the Diplomatic Corps and Mr. Kirk, the Minister for the United States, resident in Cairo.

Meanwhile, he is leaving Riyadh this evening for his camp at Ramah.

He said that he had just heard that the Resident in the Persian Gulf and the political agent in Bahrein were visiting Dhahran for three days. The officials in the Gulf, he said, were all good men. The adviser, whom the Sheikh of Bahrein had sensibly accepted some years ago, had done wonders. It used to be a dirty village—Bahrein was now in excellent order, thanks to that very good man. He went on to speak of Sheikh Ahmed of Koweit's refusal to take advice or seek counsel. He, Ibn Saud, had tried to give him good advice, but Ahmed habitually said "Ei, Ei," and did nothing. His family, the Subah, were restless again, and he was not surprised. Ahmed was a friend of his in a way, and he could never forget the debt he owed to Mubarak, his grandfather, but he thought his politics deplorable. He had heard of the project for a railway, which was nothing new to him, as he remembered it being discussed by the authorities when he was a boy in Koweit, forty-five years ago.

The sheikhs of the Trucial coast were in a bad way. The pearl market was low, and would not recover, and they had no revenue from oil. He saw little hope for them in the future, and in his opinion they would begin to decline rapidly from now onwards.

The King repeated his wish to help me onwards to the Yemen by land, and said that he had already telegraphed to the Viceroy of the Hejaz to make preparatory arrangements. He asked me to give his salutations to the Viceroy, "my son Feisal," and to "his friend" Mr. Bird.

I naturally offered him my deepest thanks for all his kindness, and then took my leave of him and the Crown Prince.

This will be a convenient place to add some notes from conversations with his advisers, Khalid al Qaraghani and Bashir as Sadawi.

The former is less sympathetic than the latter. Both called upon me separately on two occasions and conversed at length. Khalid is an amateur of European foreign affairs and the war. Although he is not outwardly pro-German, he seems to feel that the Germans will win the war. He spoke of the likelihood of Turkey joining Germany as soon as the Russian armies were running harder, the bait being a share in the Caucasus, its oil and the lure of new Turkoman subjects.

I was able to dig out this fox!

Khalid was, of course, in Berlin just before the war, having been sent on a mission to buy arms, and could hardly have helped being impressed by the then untarnished German army.

It might be worth while persuading some acquaintances of his in Cairo, of whom, no doubt, he has a number, among the *intelligentsia*, to write him encouraging letters.

I wondered, when I was talking to him, if such persons would not be fit recipients of bulletins, in private letter form, on the lines of the newsletters which used to have rather a large circulation in English just before and early in the war—"Secret History of the Week," Commander Stephen King-Hall's newsletter, and so on. They could be typed and space left for address and signature.

He spoke of his having fought the Abadhis, who were the staunchest troops of the Italians in North Africa. He was, he said, the rebel commander in the Jebel Akhdar, the very centre of the Abadhi country, and he has a very high opinion of them in so far as native troops go. He dislikes them, but recommends them as loyal to their commanders.

Bashir as Sadawi spoke mostly of the Yemen, whither he went with the Prince Muhammed after the Saudi-Yemen war, and of Syria. He is mostly interested in Arabia and Arabian politics.

He gave me useful vignettes of the Yemen notables, which I hope to have the opportunity to check for myself later. He gave, as did Ibn Saud, an agreeable picture of the Imam, describing him as lively and sympathetic in conversation and not at all like the dour man he had pictured.

He was convinced that he could be turned to our side, but one must go very slowly. He repeated this, saying again that he was ready to be won over. His advisers, pro-Italian to a man, had already lost a lot of ground. He, Bashir, was most anxious to see the Italians sent out of the Yemen: out of Arabia. We might think that they did not do much harm now, but if the German armies advanced nearer, they formed a strong point for Axis intrigue. There was trouble among the Abadhi tribesmen of the Jebel Akhdar (*i.e.*, east of the Ruba-al-Khali in the Ibadhi Imamate, supposed to be in the Oman Sultanate, but in reality not administered by the Sultan at all. Both the Abadhi centres in South-East Arabia and in North Africa are called the Jebel Akhdar). The connexion with the Italians in the Yemen seemed obvious.

He said that money is rare in the Yemen. What would be thought nothing at all in Saudi Arabia was counted a fortune there. Raghieb Bey, the Foreign Minister, is paid by the Italians a thousand riyals per month and others downwards in that scale. When Bashir was there, Raghieb had frankly tried to win him over to the Italians, and offered to arrange for him to be paid, too. He had tried to persuade him to take passage on an Italian sloop, and, when Bashir refused, explained that it would help him, Raghieb; he could telegraph Mussolini that he had arranged this, the assumption to be made in Rome being that Bashir had been won over.

He spoke of visiting Syria soon, via Bagdad, and said that he would make himself known at our embassy in Bagdad in case there was anything in which he might aid us whilst in Syria. His knowledge of Syrian politics and politicians is good, and he seems genuinely anxious to help us.

His opinion of Jamil Mardam is rather low, but he believes that Showkhri Qawatli, one of his greatest friends, can be made good use of by us if we wish. There is no point in my going into other details here, as he will give them in Bagdad, and some of them may not be news. I found him quite sympathetic, and recommend that he be given a hearing and encouragement. He is offering his services to us, and would be very hurt if they were not given a cordial welcome.

Both Bashir and Khalid, in spite of the latter's pessimism, were hospitable. Rushdi, the wizened little private secretary, was full of courteous attention, bringing us the daily news bulletins taken down from the radio, and the latest arrived copies of *The Times*, those of June!

Abdurahman al Tabaishi, the Chamberlain, was as elegant and polite as ever, and usually led us about the palace by the hand: an Arab custom.

A week-end at the palace of the Wahhabi monarch, in spite of the restrictions in the way of smoking and drinking, is full of unusual charm, and my assistant, Mr. Uniacke, whose first visit it was, was quite astounded at its Arabian Nights atmosphere and the difference in manners from the more northerly Arab countries.

I have, &c.

GERALD DE GAURY.

Enclosure 5 in No. 52.

Colonel de Gaury to Mr. Stonehewer-Bird.

Sir,

Jedda, November 20, 1941.

IBN SAUD has in the past stated that, if His Majesty's Government wished it, he would declare war on Germany and Italy, but Saudi Arabia has been so far of little military interest, while, on the other hand, we have had the immensely valuable spiritual and political support of Ibn Saud, as the Protector of Mecca and an independent Arab ruler.

2. If, however, it is thought possible that the German armies could advance further southwards next year, and as Ibn Saud's régime is about to crash financially, unless supported by His Majesty's Government, a matter which His Majesty's Legation has been taking up with His Majesty's Government, our military interests in Saudi Arabia may well be reviewed.

These appear to be the use of—

- (a) Palestine-Koweit tracks,
- (b) Landing grounds in North Arabia,
- (c) C.A.S.O.C. oil and refinery,
- (d) The great sand belts which could give invaluable respite and act as a vast mole,

and the advantage of—

- (e) Room to manœuvre east of Akaba and Transjordan,
- (f) Removal of Italian Legation from Saudi Arabia,
- (g) Freedom from internment of our own men forced into or down in Saudi Arabian territory,
- (h) Control of the movements of foreigners.

3. The disadvantages seem to be that, on the other hand, if Ibn Saud declared war on the Axis, we lose the advantage of Ibn Saud's "disinterested" advice to Arab politicians, although, if the Germans come any nearer, that would, in any case, lose its weight. Moreover, we should undoubtedly be asked to furnish anti-aircraft guns for the defence of the Saudi oilfields. (The Germans would be unlikely to bomb Mecca or Medina, for political reasons, and Riyadh is difficult for them to find.)

4. Incidentally, if the Indian army were charged with the Saudi area, they will wish to send political officers into it, but I can visualise serious political complications unless it were contingent that the political officers were found by and be responsible to the head of our diplomatic mission, as in Iraq.

5. It is clear that, if the Germans do come much nearer to Arabia, Ibn Saud will be unable, at that late stage, to declare war, and I therefore am inclined to the view that, if the military authorities will suddenly wish him to declare war later, it would be best for the matter to be taken up now and for the declaration not to be delayed.

I have, &c.

G. DE GAURY.

CHAPTER IV.—GENERAL.

[E 4761/53/65]

No. 53.

Mr. Eden to Mr. Stonehewer-Bird (Jedda).

(No. 44.)

Sir,

Foreign Office, August 15, 1941.

DURING the course of a conversation with the Saudi Arabian Minister this morning, his Excellency asked me whether I could give him any information about our plans for an Arab federation. He himself thought that it was desirable to work out those plans now and to consult with the chief Arab rulers—for instance, with King Ibn Saud, with Iraq and with Arabs in Syria. His Majesty's Government had much experience in work of this kind and unless they gave a lead and helped the Arabs by offering their advice and, if possible, putting a scheme forward, it would be hardly possible to make progress. The Arabs looked to us for leadership and, if we would give it them by propounding a scheme for Arab federation, they would join with us in the fight and we could then raise Arab troops to do battle with us and there would be no such great need to bring troops from overseas to fight in the Middle East. His Excellency continued that he felt sure that Sir M. Lampson, with his experience, could help us in this work, and, since Arabs knew the interest I had always taken in the Arab world, they hoped that I would devote attention to preparing a scheme for federation. If we could work this out, we should be conferring a great boon upon the Arabs.

2. I told his Excellency that I fully understood the importance of what he had said to me, but that the task which he was setting us was an immensely formidable one. Since the days of Muhammad no one had been able to arrive at a satisfactory scheme for Arab federation. There were so many conflicting interests to be reconciled. It was not easy in war-time to find the hours necessary for the elaboration of such a scheme and for its negotiation. His Excellency replied that none the less he hoped that we would not leave this matter until after the war. The Arabs would be deeply disappointed if they thought that such was our intention.

3. The conversation was throughout most friendly and I asked the Minister to convey to King Ibn Saud my greetings and thanks for the loyal help which he had rendered us in a difficult period. Sheikh Hafiz replied that, whatever happened, we must know that we could count upon his King.

I am, &c.

ANTHONY EDEN.

[C 10176/3686/62]

No. 54.

Speech by the Prime Minister in the House of Commons, September 9, 1941.

The Prime Minister (Mr. Churchill): Late in July I learned that the President of the United States would welcome a meeting with me in order to survey the entire world position in relation to the settled and common interests of our respective countries. As I was sure that Parliament would approve, I obtained His Majesty's permission to leave the country. I crossed the Atlantic Ocean in one of our latest battleships to meet the President at a convenient place. I was, as the House knows, accompanied by the First Sea Lord, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, and the Vice-Chief of the Air Staff, together with the Permanent Secretary to the Foreign Office and others. We were, therefore, in a position to discuss with the President and with his technical advisers every question relating to the war and to the state of affairs after the war.

Important conclusions were reached on four main topics: First of all, on the Eight-Point Declaration of the broad principles and aims which guide and govern the actions of the British and United States Governments and peoples amid the many dangers by which they are beset in these times. Secondly, on measures to be taken to help Russia to resist the hideous onslaught which Hitler has made upon her. Thirdly, the policy to be pursued towards Japan in order, if possible, to put a stop to further encroachment in the Far East likely to endanger the safety or interests of Great Britain or the United States, and thus, by timely action, prevent the spreading of the war to the Pacific Ocean. Fourthly, there was a large number of purely technical matters which were dealt with, and close personal relations were established between high naval, military and air

authorities of both countries. I shall refer to some of these topics in the course of my statement.

I have, as the House knows, hitherto consistently deprecated the formulation of peace aims or war aims—however you put it—by His Majesty's Government at this stage. I deprecate it at this time, when the end of the war is not in sight, when the conflict sways to and fro with alternating fortunes and when conditions and associations at the end of the war are unforeseeable. But a Joint Declaration by Great Britain and the United States is an event of a totally different nature. Although the principles in the Declaration, and much of the language, have long been familiar to the British and American democracies, the fact that it is a united Declaration sets up a milestone, or monument, which needs only the stroke of victory to become a permanent part of the history of human progress. The purpose of the Joint Declaration signed by President Roosevelt and myself on the 12th August is stated in the preamble to be:—

“To make known certain common principles in the national policies of our respective countries on which they base their hopes for a better future for the world.”

No words are needed to emphasise the future promise held out to the world by such a Joint Declaration by the United States and Great Britain. I need only draw attention, for instance, to the phrase in paragraph 6—

“after the final destruction of the Nazi tyranny,”

to show the profound and vital character of the solemn agreement into which we have jointly entered. Questions have been asked, and will no doubt be asked, as to exactly what is implied by this or that point, and explanations have been invited. It is a wise rule that when two parties have agreed a statement one of them shall not, thereafter, without consultation with the other, seek to put special or strained interpretations upon this or that passage. I propose, therefore, to speak to-day only in an exclusive sense.

First, the Joint Declaration does not try to explain how the broad principles proclaimed by it are to be applied to each and every case which will have to be dealt with when the war comes to an end. It would not be wise for us, at this moment, to be drawn into laborious discussions on how it is to fit all the manifold problems with which we shall be faced after the war. Secondly, the Joint Declaration does not qualify in any way the various statements of policy which have been made from time to time about the development of constitutional government in India, Burma or other parts of the British Empire. We are pledged by the Declaration of August 1940 to help India to obtain free and equal partnership in the British Commonwealth with ourselves, subject, of course, to the fulfilment of obligations arising from our long connexion with India and our responsibilities to its many creeds, races and interests. Burma also is covered by our considered policy of establishing Burmese self-government and by the measures already in progress. At the Atlantic meeting, we had in mind, primarily, the restoration of the sovereignty, self-government and national life of the States and nations of Europe now under the Nazi yoke, and the principles governing any alterations in the territorial boundaries which may have to be made. So that is quite a separate problem from the progressive evolution of self-governing institutions in the regions and peoples which owe allegiance to the British Crown. We have made declarations on these matters which are complete in themselves, free from ambiguity and related to the conditions and circumstances of the territories and peoples affected. They will be found to be entirely in harmony with the high conception of freedom and justice which inspired the Joint Declaration.

Since we last met the Battle of the Atlantic has been going on unceasingly. In his attempt to blockade and starve out this island by U-boat and air attack and the very formidable combination of U-boat and air attacks the enemy continually changes his tactics. Driven from one beat, he goes to another. Chased from home waters, driven from the approaches to this island, he proceeds to the other side of the Atlantic. Increasingly hampered by United States patrols in the North Atlantic, he develops his malice in the south. We follow hard upon his track, and sometimes we anticipate his tactics. But it is not desirable to give him too precise or, above all, too early information of the success or failure of each of his various manoeuvres, and it was therefore decided that the publication of our shipping losses at regular monthly intervals should cease. Accordingly, no statement of losses has been published for July and August, and I do not think the time has come to give the actual figures yet. The public,

and indeed the whole world, have however derived the impression that things have gone much better in those two months. I cannot deny that this is so.

The improvement in the sea war manifests itself in two directions. In the first place, there is a very great falling off in the sinkings of British and Allied ships, with a corresponding increase in the tonnage of invaluable cargoes safely landed on our shores. The estimates which I made at the beginning of the year of the volume of our importations for 1941, and which I mentioned to the House on another occasion, to which it would be improper to refer, look to me as if they would not only be made good but exceeded. The second improvement is the extraordinary rise during the last three months in the destruction of German and Italian shipping. This has been achieved very largely by the development of new and brilliant tactics by the Coastal Command and the Royal Air Force bombing squadrons, acting with the Coastal Command. To the exploits of the Air Force must be added those of our submarines. The destruction of enemy shipping by both these forms of attack has been enormous. In fact, I may say—and I would like the House to pay attention to this statement because it is really an extraordinary one for anyone to be able to make—the sinkings of British and Allied ships by enemy action in July and August, added together, do not amount to much more than one-third of the German and Italian tonnage which we have sunk by our aircraft and our submarines. How remarkable that statement is may be judged when we remember that we present perhaps ten times, or it may be even twenty times, the target to hostile attack upon the seas as is presented to us by the shipping of the enemy. His ships make short voyages, darting across a narrow strip of water or slinking along the coast from one defended port to another under air protection, while we carry on the gigantic world-wide trade of Britain with, as has often been stated and can hardly be too often repeated, never less than 2,000 ships at sea and never less than 400 in the danger zone.

I have for some time looked for an opportunity of paying a tribute to our submarines. There is no branch of His Majesty's Forces which in this war has suffered the same proportion of fatal loss as our submarine service. It is the most dangerous of all the Services. That is perhaps the reason why the First Lord tells me that entry into it is keenly sought by officers and men. I feel the House would wish to testify its gratitude and admiration for our submarine crews, for their skill and devotion, which have proved of inestimable value to the life of our country. During 1941 British submarines have sunk or seriously damaged seventeen enemy warships. Some of them were U-boats. Besides the warships, 105 supply ships have fallen to their torpedoes. This is an average of fifteen ships a month, or one ship every two days. The ships which have been torpedoed varied between large liners of 20,000 tons and caiques and schooners loaded with troops and military stores. They also included a considerable number of laden troop transports and tankers, most of which were passing across the Mediterranean, through the British submarine attack, in order to keep alive the enemy's armies in Libya. Submarines of the Royal Netherlands Navy and the Free French naval forces have been operating in combination with our submarines and have contributed in a most gallant manner to these results.

There are other perils which have been overcome and other labours of splendid quality which have been performed unknown, or almost unknown, to the public. I mentioned some of these to the House upon a private occasion, and it has been suggested to me that this particular reference should also obtain publicity. The first deals with the anti-mining service. We do not hear much about the mine menace now. Yet almost every night 30 or 40 enemy aeroplanes are casting these destructive engines, with all their ingenious variations, at the most likely spots to catch our shipping. The attack, which began in November, 1939—which began, indeed, when the war opened—with the ordinary moored mine laid by night in the approaches to our harbours, was succeeded before the end of 1939 by the magnetic mine, with all its mysterious terrors, and is now waged continually by the acoustic mine as well as the magnetic in many dangerous combinations. We do not hear much about all this now, because, by the resources of British science and British organisation, it has been largely mastered. We do not hear much about it because 20,000 men and 1,000 ships toil ceaselessly with many strange varieties of apparatus to clear the ports and channels every morning of the deadly deposits of the night. You will remember the lines of Kipling:—

“Mines reported in the fairway,

Warn all traffic and detain.

‘Sent up Unity, Claribel, Assyrian,

Stormcock, and Golden Gain.’”

This is going on night after night, day after day, and it may well be imagined as the service has to be performed in all weathers and constantly under the attack of the enemy, how excellent is the service rendered by the brave and faithful men engaged in it. We do not hear much about them because this work is done in secret and in silence, and we live on. We take it as a matter of course, like the feats of the salvage service, to which I must also refer. The salvage service has recovered, since the beginning of the war, in every circumstance of storm and difficulty, upwards of 1 million tons of shipping which would otherwise have been cast away. These marvellous services of seamanship and devotion, and the organisation behind them, prove at every stage and step the soundness of our national life and the remarkable adaptiveness of the British mind and the tenacity of the British character by which we shall certainly be saved and save others.

Although, as I have admitted, there has been a very great improvement in our losses at sea in July and August, it would be a very foolish mistake to assume that the grave dangers which threaten us are at an end. The enemy has been employing a greater number of U-boats and a larger number of long-range aircraft than ever before, and we must expect further increases. We have made prodigious exertions and our resources are continually growing. The skill and science of the Admiralty staff and their commanders, working in perfect harmony with the Royal Air Force, have gained these successes, but the Admiralty would be the last to guarantee their continuance as a matter of course, and certainly the slightest relaxation of vigilance, of exertions and of contrivance would be followed swiftly by very serious relapses. It must be remembered also that the Germans are much hampered on the American parts of the Atlantic, which are very extensive, by the fear of trouble with the powerful American naval forces which ceaselessly patrol the approaches to the Western Hemisphere. This has been a help to us. I could wish it might be a greater help. But here again, the enemy's tactics may change. No doubt Hitler would rather finish off Russia and then Britain before coming to close quarters with the United States. That would be in accordance with his habitual technique of one by one. Hitler has, however, also the greatest possible need to prevent the precious munition supplies, now streaming across the Atlantic, in pursuance of the policy of the United States Government, from reaching our shores. Should he do so the area of the danger zones would again become ocean-wide. In the meanwhile, let us hear no vain talk about the Battle of the Atlantic having been won. We may be content with the successes which have rewarded patience and exertion, but war is inexhaustible in its surprises, and very few of those surprises are of an agreeable character.

It was with great pleasure that on my homeward voyage I visited Iceland, where we were received with the utmost cordiality by the Government and the people, and where I had the honour of reviewing large numbers of the strong British and United States forces which, no doubt for entirely different reasons and in pursuance of separate duties, happen to be engaged jointly in defending this all-important island and stepping-stone across the Atlantic from Nazi intrusion and attack. Very considerable British and United States air and naval forces are also assembled in Iceland in the harbours and on the airfields. The spacious airfields which we have constructed, and which we are expanding there and in Newfoundland, will play an ever-increasing part, not only in the control of the broad waters, but in the continual flow of that broadening stream of heavy bombers, now attacking Germany night after night, which will play a decisive part, or one of the decisive parts, in the final victory.

Our affairs have also prospered in the Eastern theatre of the war. Our relations with Iraq are governed by the Treaty of Alliance, which in time of war or other emergency accords to us wide powers for the purposes of defence, both of Iraqi and British interests. The Germans had, of course, practised their usual methods of building up by infiltration and intrigue a pro-German party in Bagdad, and on the 2nd April the pro-German leader, Rashid Ali, carried out a *coup d'Etat* in Bagdad, forcing the constitutional ruler of the country, the Regent, to fly from the capital. This move did not find us wholly unprepared. We had the right and the duty to protect our lines of communication through Iraq, and orders were at once given to send to the Port of Basra, at the head of the Persian Gulf, an Indian division which was held in readiness for this emergency. This division disembarked at Basra on the 18th April, without opposition. Hoping perhaps to secure from us recognition for his illegal régime, Rashid Ali even pretended to welcome the arrival of our troops. Soon, however, instigated by the Germans and lured on by promises of prompt and powerful air support, he resorted to open war against us in utter breach of the treaty. Our air-training

station at Habbaniyah, where about 1,500 airmen and soldiers were stationed, was attacked on the 2nd May by the Iraqi army, and the position seemed for some days most critical. Reinforcements were sent through Basra and India by air, and strong mobile columns moved from Palestine to relieve Habbaniyah by land. Before they could reach Habbaniyah, however, the reinforced garrison, aided by the aircraftmen in training, turned the tables on its attackers in the most spirited manner, and, in spite of a superiority of three to one, drove the enemy off with heavy losses. By a bold stroke the bridge across the Euphrates was then captured intact, and, in spite of difficulties due to floods, our troops reached Bagdad on the 30th May, thus liberating our gifted and resolute Ambassador from his virtual blockade in the British Embassy.

While all this was going on, Rashid Ali appealed constantly to the Germans to make good their promises, but only thirty or forty German aeroplanes arrived from Syria and endeavoured tentatively to install themselves at Bagdad and also to the north at Mosul. But meanwhile there was an explanation for this failure of the Germans. The German parachute and air-borne corps, which no doubt was to have operated in Iraq and would have been assisted on its journey across Syria by the Vichy French, had been largely exterminated in the Battle of Crete. Over 4,000 of these special troops were killed, and very large numbers of carrier aircraft were destroyed. This specialist corps were so mauled in the ferocious fighting that, although they forced us to evacuate Crete, they were themselves in no condition for further operations. We, therefore, suppressed the revolt of Rashid Ali, and he and his partisans fled to Persia—I like to call it Persia, if only out of consideration for my right hon. friend, and I hope the House will permit me to indulge myself in that fashion—and the exiled Regent was able to return and to re-establish a lawful Government in Iraq. With this Government we have been able to return to the basis of friendly co-operation which we have followed for a good many years, and which we propose to follow. The treaty is now being loyally observed on both sides. Our ground and air forces have been accorded full facilities throughout Iraq, and the situation which in April had appeared so disastrous was fully restored by the end of May. There are still dangers in Iraq which require attention, but which need cause no serious anxiety.

The intrigues of the Germans with the Vichy French in Syria had meanwhile been in full swing, and the Vichy French Governor, General Dentz, in a base and treacherous manner was striving his utmost to further the German interests. We were ourselves hard pressed. Our armies in Greece had been evacuated, having lost much of their equipment, our western front in Cyrenaica had been beaten in by the incursion of General von Rommel's German Africa Corps, and we had the revolt in Iraq to put down. Nevertheless, we found it possible, in conjunction with the Free French, to invade Syria on the 8th June. The Six Free French Battalion under General Le Gentilhomme fought gallantly and co-operated with our forces, which ultimately reached the equivalent of about four divisions. The Australian and Indian troops distinguished themselves repeatedly in action. Although the Vichy French forces in their antagonism to the Free French movement fought with unusual vigour, by the 11th July the conquest of Syria was complete and all Germans had been driven out. The occupation of Syria by the Army of the Nile carried with it the means of securing the safety of Cyprus, which until then, as anyone can see, had been in great danger from the air forces which the Germans were trying to build up in Syria in order to cut Cyprus off from naval protection. All this part of the Levant thus came in to a far more satisfactory condition. Our naval and air control over the eastern end of the Mediterranean became effective, and we obtained direct contact with our Turkish friends, and the control of the pipe line and other resources.

This is the point at which it will be convenient for me to explain our position in Syria. We have no ambitions in Syria. We do not seek to replace or supplant France, or substitute British for French interests in any part of Syria. We are only in Syria in order to win the war. However, I must make it quite clear that our policy, to which our Free French Allies have subscribed, is that Syria shall be handed back to the Syrians, who will assume at the earliest possible moment their independent sovereign rights. We do not propose that this process of creating an independent Syrian Government, or Governments—because it may be that they will not be one Government—shall wait until the end of the war. We contemplate constantly increasing the Syrian share in the Administration. There is no question of France maintaining the same position which she exercised in Syria before the war, but which the French Government had realised must come to an end. On the other hand, we recognise that among all the nations of Europe the position of France in Syria is one of special privilege, and that in so

far as any European countries have influence in Syria, that of France will be pre-eminent. [Hon. members: "Why?"] Because that is the policy which we have decided to adopt. We did not go there in order to deprive France of her historic position in Syria, except in so far as is necessary to fulfil our obligations and pledges to the Syrian population. There must be no question, even in war-time, of a mere substitution of Free French interests for Vichy French interests. The Syrian peoples are to come back into their own. This is fully recognised in the documents which have been exchanged between the Minister of State and the representatives of the Free French.

I was asked a question about our relations with Iraq. They are special; our relations with Egypt are special, and, in the same way, I conceive that France will have special arrangements with Syria. The independence of Syria is a prime feature in our policy.

While all this was going on in the Levant, on the eastern flank of the Army of the Nile, that army struck two heavy blows at the German and Italian forces which had recaptured Cyrenaica. These forces found themselves unable to advance upon Egypt, as had been foreseen, without destroying the stronghold of Tobruk, which was firmly held by Australian and British troops. The heavy attacks made by our forces in the Western Desert in the middle of May and the middle of June, while they did not succeed, as we had hoped, in forcing the enemy to retreat, played a great part in bringing him to a standstill. All the German boasts which they had widely circulated throughout Europe and the East that they would be in Suez by the end of May have thus proved to be vain. Powerful reinforcements have reached the Army of the Nile in the interval, and I feel considerable confidence that we shall be able to defend Egypt successfully from German invasion across the Western Desert. Thus the position both on the western and on the eastern flanks of the Nile Valley has been greatly improved. A marked recovery has been made from the unfortunate set-back coming after the victories over the Italians which occurred at the beginning of April. Altogether we are entitled to be content with these favourable developments.

Now I turn to a far wider field. The magnificent resistance of the Russian armies and the skilful manner in which their vast front is being withdrawn in the teeth of Nazi invasion make it certain that Hitler's hopes of a short war with Russia will be dispelled. Already in three months he has lost more German blood than was shed in any single year of the last war. Already he faces the certainty of having to maintain his armies on the whole front from the Arctic to the Black Sea, at the end of long, inadequate, assailed and precarious lines of communication, through all the severity of a Russian winter, with the vigorous counter-strokes which may be expected from the Russian armies. From the moment, now nearly eighty days ago, when Russia was attacked, we have cast about for every means of giving the most speedy and effective help to our new ally. I am not prepared to discuss the military projects which have been examined. Such a discussion would be harmful to our interests, both for what was said and for what was not said. Nor will it be possible for anyone representing the Government to enter upon any argument on such questions. In the field of supply more can be said. I agreed with President Roosevelt upon the message which was sent to Premier Stalin, the terms of which have already been made public. The need is urgent, and the scale heavy. A considerable part of the munition industry and iron and steel production of Russia has fallen into the hands of the enemy. On the other hand, the Soviet Union disposes of anything from 10 million to 15 million soldiers, for nearly all of whom they have equipment and arms. To aid in the supply of these masses, to enable them to realise their long continuing force and to organise the operation of their supply, will be the task of the Anglo-American-Russian Conference.

There has been no unavoidable delay in arranging for this conference or in choosing the personnel of the British Mission. Some people seem to think nothing has been done, nothing has been sent and nothing is going on. The study of the whole problem had been ceaselessly proceeding, both in the United States and here, and we are waiting the arrival of the American Mission under Mr. Harriman, which I trust will soon be here. This mission contains important representatives of the United States fighting services. Our mission will be headed by Lord Beaverbrook, who has already visited the United States and has been in the closest conference with the President and his advisers and officers. It must be remembered that we already have a military mission with officers of high rank in Moscow. Those whom Lord Beaverbrook takes with him will therefore supplement those who are already there, and during the conference he will be in charge of all of them. The names are already selected and will be published in

due course. It is obviously undesirable to announce the date when the mission will start for the conference, but no time will be lost. Meanwhile, many very important emergency decisions are being taken, and large supplies are on the way.

We must be prepared for serious sacrifices in the munitions field in order to meet the needs of Russia. The utmost exertion and energy will therefore be required from all concerned in production in order not only to help Russia but to fill the gaps which must now be opened in our longed-for, and at last arriving supply. It must be remembered that everything that is given to Russia is subtracted from what we are making for ourselves, and in part at least what would have been sent us by the United States. In terms of finished munitions of war the flow of our own production in this country and the Empire is still rising. It will reach full flood during this third year of our war-time munitions production. If the United States are to fulfil the task they have set themselves, very large new installations will have to be set up or converted, and there will have to be a further curtailment over there, as they fully recognise, of civilian consumption. We must ourselves expect a definite reduction in the military supplies from America on which we had counted, but within certain limits we are prepared to accept those facts and their consequences.

Other limiting factors are also present. There is time, there is distance, there is geography. These impose themselves upon us. There are the limitations of transport and of harbour facilities. Above all, there is the limitation of shipping. Only three routes are open—the Arctic route by Archangel, which may be hampered by the winter ice; the Far Eastern route via Vladivostok, which is scowled upon by the Japanese and operates only over 7,000 miles of railway line; and, finally, the route across Persia, which leads over a 500-mile stretch from the Persian Gulf to that great inland sea, the Caspian, upon which the Russians maintain a strong naval force and which again gives access to the very heart of Russia, the Volga Basin.

The Germans were, of course, busy betimes in Persia with their usual tricks. German tourists, technicians and diplomatists were busy suborning the people and Government of Persia with the object of creating a Fifth Column which would dominate the Government at Tehran and not only seize or destroy the oil-fields, which are of the highest consequence, but—a fact to which I attach extreme importance—close the surest and shortest route by which we could reach Russia. We thought it necessary, therefore, to make sure that these machinations did not succeed. Accordingly, we demanded of the Persian Government the immediate expulsion of their Teutonic visitors. When under local duress the Persian Government failed to comply with our request, British and Russian forces entered Persia from the south and from the north in sufficient and, indeed, overwhelming strength.

The Persian Government, having made such resistance as they thought fit, sued for peace. We must have the surrender into our hands of all the Germans and Italians who are on the premises; we must have the expulsion of the German and Italian Legations, whose diplomatic status we, of course, respect; and we must have the unquestioned control and maintenance of the through communications from the warm water port of Basra to the Caspian Sea. It is from this point particularly that American and British supplies can be carried into the centre of Russia in an ever-widening flow, and, naturally, every effort will be made, and is being made, to improve the railway communications and expand the volume of supplies which can be transported over the existing British-gauge railway, which has happily only recently been completed, and now requires only large accessions of rolling-stock and locomotives to expand it greatly as a line of supply.

The House will, I have no doubt, approve the somewhat drastic measures we thought it right to take to achieve those important objects and the further measures we may have to take. The occupation of Persia enables us to join hands with the southern flank of the Russian armies and to bring into action there both military and air forces. It also serves important British objects in presenting a shield which should bar the eastward advance of the German invader. In this the armies of India, whose military quality has become shinningly apparent, will play an increasing part, and in so doing will keep the scourge of war a thousand miles or more from the homes of the peoples of India. One must, therefore, expect that very considerable deployments of British, Indian and Dominion forces will gradually manifest themselves in these enormous and desolate or ill-developed regions. The Allied front now runs in an immense crescent from Spitzbergen, in the Arctic Ocean, to Tobruk, in the Western Desert, and our section of this front will be held by the British and Empire

armies with their growing strength fed and equipped by ocean-borne supplies from Great Britain, from the United States, from India and from Australasia. I am glad to say that adequate naval power will be at hand in both the Atlantic and Indian Oceans to secure the sea routes against attack.

If we now look back for a moment, we can measure the solid improvement in our position in the Middle East or East which has been achieved since the French suddenly fell out of the war and the Italians made haste so eagerly to come in against us. At that date all we had in those parts was from 80,000 to 100,000 men, starved of munitions and equipment, which had all been sent to the French front, always first to claim the best we had. We had lost our means of safe communication through the Mediterranean and almost all the main bases on which we relied. We were anxiously concerned for our defence of Nairobi, Khartum, British Somaliland and, above all, of the Nile Valley and Palestine, including the famous cities of Cairo and Jerusalem. None was safe, but, nevertheless, after little more than a year we have managed to gather very large and well-equipped armies, which already begin to approach 750,000, which are supplied and are being supplied with masses of equipment of all kinds. We have developed an air force almost as large as that we had in Great Britain when the war began, an air force which is rapidly expanding. We have conquered the whole of the Italian Empire in Abyssinia and Eritrea and have killed or taken prisoner the Italian armies of over 400,000 men by which these regions were defended. We have defended the frontiers of Egypt against German and Italian attack. We have consolidated our position in Palestine and Iraq. We have taken effective control of Syria and provided for the security of Cyprus. Finally, by the swift, vigorous campaign in Persia which has taken place since the House last met we have joined hands with our Russian Allies and stand in the line to bar the further eastward progress of the enemy. I cannot help feeling that these are achievements which, whatever the future may contain, will earn the respect of history and deserve the approval of the House.

Thus far then have we travelled along the terrible road we chose at the call of duty. The mood of Britain is wisely and rightly averse from every shallow or premature exultation. This is no time for boasts or glowing prophecies, but there is this—a year ago our position looked forlorn and well-nigh desperate to all eyes but our own. To-day we may say aloud before an awe-struck world, "We still are master of our fate. We still are captain of our souls."

[E 6881/53/65]

No. 55.

Sir Kinahan Cornwallis to Mr. Eden.—(Received October 23.)

(No. 282.)

Sir,

Bagdad, October 4, 1941.

WITH reference to your despatch No. 103 of the 27th August, I have the honour to submit herewith some observations on the question of Arab federation.

2. I should like to say first of all that it seems to me improbable that Hafiz Wahba, in speaking to you as he did on the 13th August, was acting on instructions from King Abdul Aziz. His Majesty's position in the Arab world is, in fact, one of the big problems that face those who seek to bring the principal Arab countries closer together, and he has not in the past shown any real desire to further Arab federation except in so far as such federation might serve his own dynastic ambitions. I am disposed, therefore, to think that Hafiz Wahba, in the manner common to many of Ibn Saud's representatives abroad, was expressing his own rather than his master's views.

3. The High Commissioner has stated in a recent note on this subject that among the Arabs in Palestine interest in federation is waning because they suspect the motives of the Jews who are pushing it. In Syria the Free French have set up a Government which enjoys little favour with the Nationalist party, who appear to be far too busy with internal matters to show any immediate interest in plans for Arab federation. Moreover as, according to many accounts, the Syrian nationalists are under German influence, it would seem probable that, as a matter of principle, they would oppose any action taken by the present Syrian Administration and would probably be unwilling to co-operate with us in this matter.

4. In Egypt interest in Arab federation is at the best luke-warm and apparently confined to a few enthusiasts, and in Iraq internal politics are the dominant interest of the moment. In all reports which have reached me there has been no hint of a desire that we should take the initiative.

5. I have no doubt that the question of Arab federation is of great and urgent importance to all Arab nationalists, but it seems that at present there is no general movement in the Arab countries in favour of raising it, and I see no advantage, indeed many disadvantages, in our setting the ball rolling. In Iraq Pan-Arab activity has in the past been closely associated with anti-British propaganda and has invariably led to a feeling of unrest and to demonstrations of ill will towards the non-Arab (and non-Moslem) elements in the country. Moreover, the underlying motive of Arab federation is in its essence anti-foreign. It is inspired by a wish to form a *bloc* of Arab States which will be strong enough to secure what are considered to be Arab rights in Palestine and Syria, to strengthen the independence of all the Arab countries concerned and to present a united front to foreign Powers, especially Great Britain and France.

6. Nevertheless it is, I think, in our interests to move with the stream and to continue to show sympathy towards the movement as it develops strength. I take this view partly because we shall only incur the enmity of the Arabs if we oppose the movement; partly because in spite of its potentially hostile inspiration it need not necessarily be inimical to our interests, and, indeed, could in certain circumstances be beneficial, and partly because we know that the jealousies and rivalries between the different Arab countries will deprive it of much of its dangers.

7. Although, as I have mentioned above, public interest in unity or federation is not now unusually active, it is inevitable that the question will be raised by the Arabs either in the near or more distant future, and it is important that His Majesty's Government should decide beforehand the policy which it will be wise to follow when this occurs. The advantage of securing French agreement to any plan adopted should be borne in mind.

8. The countries concerned are clearly not yet ripe for full coalescence, but it would not, I think, be impossible to evolve a practicable plan for a modest beginning. The first objective to be aimed at would have to be limited in scope, and should, I suggest, be regarded more as a step towards the removal of the artificial cultural and economic barriers that have grown up between the Arab countries than anything so ambitious as the organisation of any form of political federation. With this principle in mind initial experiments could be conveniently restricted to the adjacent territories of Iraq, Syria, Transjordan and Palestine.

9. There are many practical difficulties in the way of the application of this idea, but I think that through close study of the prevailing conditions in each country means could be found to overcome them. Cultural barriers could possibly be removed by establishing closer harmony in school curricula, by periodical cultural conferences, by the publication of journals of common interest to all, by the exchange of students in higher educational institutions and similar devices. The removal of economic barriers such as different currencies, different tariff systems and in some instances conflicting local interests would be a more difficult, but by no means an impossible task. As Dr. Magnes of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem pointed out in a recent paper, history has shown that economic union can be organised successfully before political union takes place, and can appropriately be made the first expression of the political aims of countries which desire to federate.

10. The fact that Syria has now been brought into the sterling area is important and should simplify many aspects of this problem.

11. When the time comes to deal with an effective demand for federation it might be possible for His Majesty's Government to facilitate the setting up of commissions to study these questions and to report to the Governments concerned. Such commissions should have a preponderant Arab element with British experts to assist.

12. A restricted scheme of this kind should be advantageous to us and should lead to increased contentment and prosperity amongst the Arabs. Since, however, it ignores the idea of political federation, it would not satisfy the extreme and vociferous nationalist elements and, if proposed by us, would be likely to meet with a hostile reception, especially so long as the Syrian and Palestine questions remain unsolved. It is those questions which are the cause of most of our troubles with the Arabs and, until they are settled, any initiative which we might take along the lines set forth above would, I feel sure, be regarded with suspicion in many quarters.

13. It appears probable that the responsible Arab leaders themselves will come to the conclusion that their wisest course is to begin slowly. They talk vaguely of political confederation and unity, but I do not believe that any of them have attempted to define those terms. When they come to realise the

immense difficulties which exist, I have a feeling that they will shrink from trying to solve them and that they will be the more ready to turn to us for help and advice after they have made their own decision to start on more modest lines.

14. For obvious practical reasons it would be better that any action of this kind should be postponed until we can visualise what will be the basis of the post-war settlement, and I hope that the whole question will be allowed to lie dormant until the present imminent dangers of war in the Middle East have passed. It is, however, quite likely that our hands may be forced earlier than we wish, and for this reason I would suggest that the action to be taken to meet such an eventuality should be studied on the lines adumbrated above.

15. I am sending copies of this despatch to His Majesty's Minister of State at Cairo, His Majesty's representatives at Cairo, Jedda and Jerusalem, to Jeb at Jerusalem, the Combined Intelligence Centre, Iraq, and the Combined Middle East Intelligence Centre, Cairo.

I have, &c.

KINAHAN CORNWALLIS.

[E 6864/53/65]

No. 56.

Sir M. Lampson to Mr. Eden.—(Received October 23.)

(No. 939.)

Sir,

Cairo, October 2, 1941.

I HAVE the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your despatch No. 266 of the 27th August last inviting my observations on the suggestion of the Saudi Arabian Minister in London that His Majesty's Government should take the initiative in putting forward a scheme of Arab federation without awaiting the end of the war.

2. It is difficult to see what useful advice could be given by His Majesty's Government or what scheme worked out until there is more agreement on what is meant by the rather vague term of Arab federation. For instance, is it envisaged as a political federation under a single leadership or in the form of States bound together by a comprehensive political agreement? Or is it contemplated under the more modest forms of cultural, trade and customs unions?

3. Another point to be considered is the extent of territory which such a federation would aim at embracing. The Saudi Arabian Minister mentioned only Arabia, Iraq and Syria. Palestine is an important omission from this list, for without it any Arab federation would be defective for practical purposes. Moreover, Egypt, it must be remembered, considers herself the natural leader of the Arab world and would probably want to play some part in such federative schemes.

4. The chances are that any political federation of Arab States would not be a practical proposition for some time. The strong existing rivalries between Arab rulers and personalities of the different States involved, *e.g.*, King Ibn Saud's feud with the Hashimites, constitute serious obstacles to an Arab federation. Apart from these native difficulties, there are the foreign difficulties, *i.e.*, our position in Palestine and that of the French in Syria. Are we prepared to establish a native Government in Palestine which, under a British administration, could hardly enter an Arab federation? Are the French prepared to waive their fundamental opposition to Syria's entry into any federative scheme?

5. Cultural, economic and customs unions of Arab countries might be more practical politics, and these aspects of "federation" might be studied now.

6. Palestine, no doubt, will have much to say regarding the possibilities of economic union which would react on some of its industries built up under a wall of protection. Anyhow, the question of economic unity would have to be discussed by economic experts with local knowledge of the situation in the countries concerned. As regards cultural union, the danger of our doing anything to promote it at the present moment is that cultural contacts inevitably lead to political ones, and in the existing state of feeling in the Egypto-Arab world great prudence would have to be exercised in encouraging such contacts during the course of the war.

7. I am sending copies of this despatch to the High Commissioner at Jerusalem and to His Majesty's representatives at Bagdad and Jedda.

I have, &c.

MILES W. LAMPSON.

END